



Though Thou no Prophet art, nor Prophets Son
 Without their Spirit, this could ne're be done
 Though Brightman, Napeir, Mede, are gone to rest,
 Their Sprite yet liues redoubled in thy Breast.
 Yee, that haue cast th' Apocalyps to ground,
 Because so dark, mysterious, and profound,
 Why, take it up againe, and use this Glasse;
 Twill then no longer for a Mysticke passe.

(1) L. C. del. et sculp.

1ST. VERS. 1974

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'ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ 'ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΕΩΣ,
 OR,
The Revelation Revealed
 Being a Practical
EXPOSITION
 On the Revelation of
S^t JOHN.

Whereunto is annexed a small Essay, Entituled
Quinto - Monarchia,
 Cum
QUARTO ΟΜΟΛΟΓΙΑ,
 OR,
A Friendly Complayance
 BETWEEN
Christ's Monarchy,
 AND THE
MAGISTRATES

By William Hicks, Gent. Sometime of Wadham Colledge in Oxon,
 Now living near the Mount in Cornwall.

Dan. 2. 28. There is a God in heaven that revealeth Secrets, and maketh knowne
 the King wher shall be in the latter days.
 Rev. 1. 3. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that bear the words of this Prophet,
 and keep those things which are written herein; for the time is at hand.
 A Deo principium — Dabit Deus his quoque finem.

LONDON,
 Printed by J. Macock, for Daniel White, and sold at his Shop at the
 Seven Stars in S^t Pauls Churchyard, 1659.

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To the Right Worshipful
S^r Richard Chyverton,
Late Lord Mayor of the Honourable City of
L O N D O N.

SIR,

Take the boldness to present unto
You this Essay on the Revelation of
S. John; and I hope, for this my Ad-
dres; and for prefixing your most worthy
Name to this Discourse, I shall not be judged
either unseasonable or presumptuous; Con-
sidering not only the great Honour and Devoti-
on I bear to your most Worthy Name and
Person, but being also bound in Gratitude to
Revive the Memory of that most Generous
and Noble Family of the *Chyvertons of Kerris*,
your Worthy Kinsmen: To whom I being
obliged by so many real Benefits and neer Re-
lations, that I knew not how to manifest a bet-
ter Retaliation, then by a Revival of their most
Worthy Memories, in the Dedication of this
Discourse to your Worships Protection, who

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is the only Surviving Branch of that Ancient and Truly Generous Family of the Chyvertons of our County of Cornwall. But by the way I shall take leave to assure you (being not altogether ignorant of the ends and aims that most men lay before themselves in such *Dedications*) that it was least in my intention to affix hereunto your Honourable Name, thereby to add a countenance to any private opinions of mine; much less was it in my eye to raise an esteem upon my weak endeavours, by insinuating the least complyance in your Worships judgement, in many things I have written herein; let them stand or fall according to the Truth and Reason therein manifested; I quite disclaim any such pretences, in having any Interest in my Plea for this my Application unto your Worthy Self: But if the least measure of the Truth of God be herein found, I trust it will be no dishonour to your Self, nor to the greatest amongst men, that such walk under the countenance of your Authority and great Names: But what herein shall justly appear heterodox and dissentaneons from the Word of God, let it not have the least approbation or countenance from man, but let it rather be as an abortive birth, and dye for ever, never to have a resurrection more.

Thus having wiped off the sinister Interpretations for this Application, In the next place

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place be pleased to take a view of what is here tendered, when the urgency of your great and important affairs will permit, it being an Interpretation on part of the Book of John's Divine Prophesies, wherein God's various dealings with his Church and people, as also with the Empires of the world under whose power they come under, are under most lively Prophetical Representations, and Hyeroglyphique Figures, discovered and made known, even from the time of the giving of that Prophesie, unto the end of the world.

And you know, 'tis a common Custome amongst most men, to get a Prognostication in the ending of the old year, to inform themselves of the Accidents and Events that are likely to be in the ensuing year. Lo, now, about the end of this year, I present You with this first part of this Divine Ephemerides, composed by the skilfullest Astronomer that ever was: There is now no need of upholding that wretched practice of running to the Wizards or Star-gazers, to know the Events and Successes of Churches, States, and Kingdoms: We have here a full Discovery from himself, who created the Stars, and knows their course; and calls them all by their Names; who looeth the bands of Orion, and binds up the influence of the Pleiades. Men may conjecture, and their conjecture fail; they talk of the hea-

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vens, but never were there for a full discove-
ry; but here then the Lord of Heaven and
Earth, and he that created the Seas, telling
and foretelling Signs and Wonders, not for a
day, or a moneth, or a year, but for many
years, even until the end of the World, not
only the events of our present old year, but
the accidents also of the New year: that is, of
the other life. The Mathematicians of this
world never dream'd of that great day, where-
in a thousand years should make up but one
great and glorious day: Only this Book, the
Saints great Almanack reports this, and there-
fore I believe it. *Aristotle* could not conceive
that the World should end, because he never
understood how it did begin: but behold a
greater then *Aristotle* is here. Christ hath
taught of the end, and given Notes and
Signs to discern this end.

I doubt not but you will perceive and finde
how singular useful the knowledge of these
Prophesies will be to all persons, but especially
to such as have their hands much employed in
the great Affairs of the World, so that when
their Lord and Master cometh with ten thou-
sands of his Angels to call them to an account
of their Stewardship, how comfortable then
will the contemplation be, that they in their
several Generations have employed their Inter-
ests, Power, and Authority in the World,
for

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for Christ and his people, against Antichrist
and its Adherents? Those Christian Wor-
thies that have already long since fallen asleep
with those that are alive at Christ's second com-
ing, that have engaged on this account, will
be sure then to have an *Euge bone Serve*, to be
their portion; and they that have ruled here
for Christ, shall then rule and reigne with him
for ever. But I desire not to be mistaken in
this, that I judge all is Antichrist that many in
these days call Antichrist: I know there is a true
real Antichrist, an opposite state to Christ and
Truth, under the Visor of Christ and Truth: It is not every difference in Judgement or Re-
ligion that makes up Antichrist; indeed of
late I finde it a State-knack of several parties
and factions to brand their adversaries with
those odious stiles of Antichrist, Heretiques,
&c. that they may go undiscovered, that de-
serve such Titles better themselves, or at least
wise, so to raise a Scar-crow, to drive away
the fearful and dis-ingenious from a full enqui-
ring into the Truths of God, that would disco-
ver the vanity and folly of their opposers. But
no more of this.

And here by the way, I shall not be ash-
amed to acquaint you with one mistake of mine,
who once thought (as most men do) that God
in his Providential disposing the Kingdoms of
this world, and in exalting men of low degrē
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into the Throne of Princes, and throwing down great Princes, and their Progenies, into the state of slaves, it was only to manifest his Sovereignty over the Kingdoms of this world, to give them to whom he pleaseth: but more maturely considering the All-wise ordering hand of God in such great Transactions, I have found the issue in all Ages to be very advantagious to the Church of God, and the result of all such State-shakings and Revolutions to be in mercy towards his Church and People. When God broke the great *Caldeo-Assyrian* Monarchy, and transferred it to the *Medio-Persian*, how wonderfully, and by what strange providence did God raise *Cyrus* his servant or instrument for that work? Who was exposed to be destroyed by the command of his Grand-sire *Astyages*, whiles an Infant, upon pretence of some fatal Prophesie, yet preserved and brought up amongst Shepherds, as his Story goes; that afterwards he became most providentially the great deliverer of God's people (the Jews) from their *Affyrian* bondage. *Moses* the great Captain of Israel, we are sure trod almost the same path under a strange providence of Preservation, that at last he became the deliverer of Israel from their *Egyptian* thralldome. When *Saul* was set by, who was of a kingly presence, and by the Head and Shoulders above his brethren, *David* was called

led from the Sheep-cot to the Throne, the issue whereof was, the exaltation of Israel, and the downfall of their enemies. If we shall but reflect since Christ's coming in the flesh, on the example of *Constantine the Great*, Son unto *Helena* a British Lady, who through many glorious and eminent Victories and Services, was at last advanced to the Imperial Seat, and how he at last became as a Temporal Saviour to the Church of Christ, and Destroyer to the Kingdom of the Dragon, is most marvellous to consider. It is worth further the taking notice of, how wonderfully God in late ages, raised the Spirits of some obscure persons, as *Martin Luther*, and his Associates of the first Reformation, with some other Reformed Ministers since, that they have made the great Hierarchy of *Rome* to shake with their Power; so that many Christian Princes then, and since, began to hate the Whore, with the Wine of whose Fornications they were made drunken; and now begin not only to hate her, but to make her desolate and naked, and to eat her flesh. But yet that age was but the first fruits, or *Prodromus*, not the consummation of the work; for she having since lifted up her head, and endeavoured to cover her nakedness, and to cure her self of her great Wound received, but all in vain, for her period drawing nigh, God exasperates her

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her sore more and more, and makes those Horns, those Princes that were once her strong Supporters, to fall off from her, and to hate her. Indeed the first Reformers took off her outward garments, and showed her nakedness in her false Doctrine, and partly in her false Worship, and then began to eat her Flesh, in taking off some of her pompous Revenues, but yet the main Work was left undone to its appointed time: For as this great City rose not in one day, but gradually, so will also her ruine be by several Measures, or Vials of God's wrath poured out upon her, until the consummation of her ruine come with fire, both Material and Analogical, the one the fire of God's Word, first destroying quite her false Worship, which daylie goes on in perfecting: the other, God's fire of War and Judgements, destroying quite up her outward State and Policy, that her place be no more found. And to the bringing about this great end, God works very variously, sometimes in moving on the hearts of Princes, and so makes them willing unto this work: sometimes in laying aside Princes of ancient and potent Families, and raising up meaner and lower Persons on their Thrones (as he most wonderfully hath done of late among our selves) to whom he gives Hearts, Spirits, and Gifts meet for this great work: and lastly, in over-

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over-ruling the designs of others, that though they go about to seek themselves, and to advance their own Dominion and Power of Ruling, yet the All-wise providence of God knows how so to order them, as to bring about his predesigned end: For I cannot believe that they will be all pious good Princes, and right in their ends, that shall be employed about this work; for they are the ten Horns, or ten Kings that receive power one hour with the Beast, and were Members of him that shall destroy the Whore, and burn her with Fire, Rev. 17. 12. 16. I am of the mind, that few conclude that Hen. 8. and some other Princes were so justifiable in their ends in expelling the Authority of Antichrist, as they should have been, and yet God employed them as his Instruments in this Work: and when they have done his business, God knows how to lay them by, and all such self-ended persons, as useless, or at least, make them but as Gibeonites, or Hewers of Wood in the House of the Lord.

Lastly, Your Worship may be pleased to take notice, that some conceive those and the like Interpretations of dark Prophesies, to be but the issues of distempered brains, and of little certainty. To whom I answer, Seeing that this is a Book that hath the publique impress of the Spirit in it, and left (as it were) as its

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last Legacy of this sort in the Church of Christ; I profess soberly, I know not what tolerable sense to set on this Book of the Revelation, if it be not for an historical discovery, under Types and Figures, of all the Changes and Revolutions, with their Periods and Issues, that should befall the Church of God, and their Oppressors and Enemies, until the end of all. I confess there may be some difference in Interpreting, and in not rightly Applying some of the several Characters, Periods, and Visions of this Book, and in other circumstantial parts thereof; and wherein I fail, I entreat not only your Worship, but all others, to remember my weakness, and our common attribute, *Humanum est errare*: and especially being amongst such Prophetical deeps and difficulties, which may well plead for his failings, who is conscious of his insufficiencies for so high and difficult an undertaking: Yet this I dare be bold to say, that the substantial part of this Prophesie is here cleared and discovered: And if any receive light hereby, to the better understanding the dark Mysteries thereof, give me leave to say with *Daniel*, cap. 2. 28, *There is a God in Heaven which reveleth Mysteries, to him be all the Glory.*

But to You (worthy Sir) I have nothing more to add, nor for you a greater good to pray, then that God who having exalted you in

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in Authority and Power, into that likeness of himself, so he would Engrave upon you another image or likeness of his own, true wisdom, and give you an enlightened, wise (*Solomon-like*) discerning heart, whereby you may daily see more and more into the great and glorious discoveries of the Truths of God in this Book of Prophesies, and else-where, in the holy Word of God; that you may have your aims right, and your heart fixed to prosecute those ends, and that in integrity, which God in your present Employments hath called you unto. The work of this present generation for all Christian Worthies to set their hands and hearts to, being (as I conceive) if not to the downfall of the Throne of the Beast, yet at least to the Eclipsing of the *Austrian Sun*, the great Pillar of the Antichristian State. And that your heart and hand may not be wanting amongst the chiefest of the Christian Worthies in those great transactions, is the great desire of him that is

Your Worships

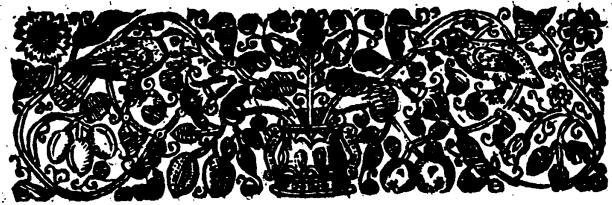
Most Humble,

and Faithful Servant

William Hicks.

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To the
Judicious Christian
R E A D E R :

R E A D E R .



*T*is very well known, that amongst most that are conversant in the profoundest Speculations, and in searching out hidden Verities, they are various in their Projects and their Cogitations, are usually fixed upon divers ends. Some know, that they may be known: and this is vanity. Some know, that they may know, and this is curiosity. Others know that they may edifie, and this is charity. How distasteful the two former are to all judicious persons, and how desirable the latter is to all knowing Christians, I need not inculcate. The latter being my choice, I hope thy candour, and the uprightness of my ends, will Apologize for me, in that I appear in Publique, now among the croud in Print, and at such a time, wherein (as one wittily

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wittily observed, vix. Heylins Geogr. in folio 865.) The Treasury of Learning was never so full, and yet never more empty; by reason of the many vain, frotby, and unnecessary discourses it abounds with, from the Scribblers and idle Paper-blurrers of these days; and if I have gone beside my self, to become one of that number, by playing the fool in Print, I must say as Paul did to his Corinthians, 2 Cor. 5. 13. Sive insanimus, Deo insanimus; sive sana mente sumus, vobis sana mente sumus. So if I have played the fool herein, it is unto God, and for your sakes (Christians) that I have done it.

But if thou askest me to what end I fall upon this task of interpreting this Book of Prophesies, seeing many have already attempted it, whereof some are come off with loss, yet others with more credit and proficiency?

I answer, Indeed in all our actions and undertakings of this kinde, we are to enquire in the first place Cui bono? To what good? for what end we do effect them? For the end crowns all our actions, and adds perfection to them: Tendit rector, or, Exitus actu probat: The excellency of our works appears and are distinguished by their ends: Therefore though my labour herein may by some be accounted superfluous, and my self to be justly numbered among the former sort, that have Oleum & Operam perdiderunt, that is, come off with loss in their undertakings; yet I believe,

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the indifferent and ingenious Reader will be of another minde concerning it, when God hath given him and my self opportunity to go thorow with it; though I must confess, it will partake of much weakness and imperfections from the Instrument, yet I trust, the Reader will find my ends high and honourable enough, and of sufficient excellency to bear up my Spirits in the undertaking, and his in perusing and considering. And although to some I may seem herein Actum agere, to fall upon a Theme fully already discussed by others; yet I am of opinion with that saying of Augustines, Utile est plures Libros a pluribus fieri diverso stilo, etiam de Questionibus iisdem, ut ad plurimos res perveniat, ad alios sic, ad alios autem sic. That it is profitable to have Books composed of the same Works or Questions, in a various and divers stile, that knowledge may be conveyed to very many, to some in one manner, to others after another.

Though I shall not much boast of my impartiality in Interpreting and Applying those Prophe-tical Visions, yet I assure the Reader, as far as I know mine own heart, it was single and unbyassed in this undertaking, having first desired God to guide my Understanding and Pen aright, to write no more then what did genuinely rise from the substance and coherence of the Text, or what might be extracted therefrom by good consequence, on what did naturally flow from the proper tendency

of

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of the Figures and Hieroglyphique characters of each Vision in this Book, interpreted, not according to private Judgement, nor unto the Interest of any Party or Faction (being free from any such pre-engagements) all which are to be laid aside in all such undertakings, as Abraham did his followers (as great incumbrances) when he went into the Mount to confer with the Lord in Prayer. I trust the candid Reader shall finde the Divine Mysteries of this Book of Revelations Opened and Applied, according to the minde of the Spirit, therein (for the main) made evident by the proper characters of each Vision, and according to that full compleat Spirit of Harmony that runs through this whole Book of Divine Propheſies. I confess I may come short of some Learned Men who have gone herein before me, to whose Labours I must justly acknowledge a due Tribute, being assisted thereby unto this Work: And though I cannot justly apply that saying of Cicero's to my cause (for it would favour of too much vanity and self-exalting) Recentissima quæque sunt emandata magis: yet this I may boldly adventure to say, That thou shalt find such variety of Collections, Observations, Questions, and Truths herein Discussed, not ordinary in any former Writers hereupon, that will yeild thee (if an ingenious person) no small delight and profit in Reading, Pondering, and Treasuring up the same. The variety of Flowers makes the

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the sweetest Poſie: and various Discording, yet harmonizing Sounds, makes the sweetest Musick; So variety of Truths and Questions Discussed, will yeild the greater pleasure and profit to the Reader. And though I must needs say that many that went before me on this Theme, did excel in true Piety, Learning, and Parts, yet saving due respects both to the Persons and their Parts, it is not at all strange, if that we in this Age, being advanced by their be'p upon their own shoulders, and coming nearer unto the accomplishment of the events and the end of all, shou'd see a little further in the Truth of these mysterious Propheſies, than they that went before us, and no discredit to them, be they ever so Godly and Learned. I have observed that some (and no mean Ones) that are gone before on this Theme, are not without their Maculæ and Defects, and more especially, in that they have appeared of too private and narrow a Spirit in their Interpreting and applying the Propheſies of this Book unto their own times, Interests, and Designs; as if the Actions and Revolutions of every petty City, and Commonweal, yea, the ends, Designs, and Periods of every Person that Divine Providence exalts in Power and Authority somewhat beyond the common boundaries of the ordinary Lords and Rulers of the Nations, were Comprised, Predicted, Fore-told, and Propheſied of in this Book of Revelations; and

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so by this means makes strange and wilde Applications of the Visions and Mysteries of this Book: And where this conceit works strongly, it will work madly too; when once it is elevated to that height and gets a power, then there must be no opposing of those Ends and Designs that such Opinionists pretends as just Collections from the Prophesies of this Book; which they interpret according to their own Fancies, and have only a Being (as wilde Chymeras, in their own deceived Imaginations.

This is that Rock whereon some have formerly made Shipwrack, and perished thereon, and others now adays are Sayling with a full gale towards the same Charybdis; and if God in Mercy prevent not, will thereon split and perish also. But to return.

Here I shall give an answer Cui bono; or to what ends I undertook this Exercitation on this Book of the Revelation. This last, the Discovery of this dangerous Rock, was not the least End that I set before me in this undertaking: Which Ends, for better satisfaction, I shall here more particularly set down in Order.

1. My first was (next Gods Glory, and the advancement of his Truth) for the keeping the Saints feet streight, in not stumbling by a false Interpreting and Applying of this Book of Prophesies: and in vainly endeavouring the setting up of the Kingdom of Christ before the time; and in

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in the pulling down all Authority that oppose such Pretenders, to their own utter ruine and undoing without Repentance.

2. That Christ's true Saints may be comforted and supported under all their Afflictions and Persecutions in this World, by the consideration of Christ's own True and Real Kingdom which is to come: Not this of Weakness, which is partly Spiritual, partly Carnal; but that of Power, and great Glory, when all his Enemies shall be made his Foot-stool, and broken and ruled by his Rod of Iron; which will be at the great Day of his Appearance and coming in the Clouds, and not before.

3. In Profiting my self and others: My self in Writing; others in Reading. As it was once said by Augustine, Prodest scribendo; & scribendo prodest: We having all (as Aquinas testifies) longing desires, conjungi cum suo principio, to be conjoyned with our principle.

4. To redeem the time, having spent many precious hours and days in folly, and been examples unto others in evil doing: So there is all reason we should redeem the time: and God calls in this day of light, both from my self, and all others, that we should be patterns unto others in well doing; if that possibly we may redeem the lost time of our youth and folly.

Lastly, That God may have his ends and glory in the work of our Creation, we being born not

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alone for our selves, but for the work of our generation, to serve God therein faithfully, in all the relations that he calls us to. God hath not sent us into this world to spend away all our precious days in sports, pastimes, and follies, or about the more profitable affairs of this present world, as the custom of too too many is; but to sacrifice some competent part thereof unto the service of our God and Christ, that our friends, neighbours, relations, and posterity, may take encouragements and examples by us, to live more unto the praise of God and their Creator.

Having thus laid down my ends in this undertaking, I have this more to acquaint thee with. This Exercitation being sent forth as my First-born in this kinde, in publique unto the world, the second being intended also, on this whole Book of Divine Prophesies, if God doth continue but his wonted mercies and encouragements thereto: This first is more Practical and Doctrinal, and therefore I have herein followed a method with Observations and Notes, which the second will not so commodiously admit; the great work of that being to demonstrate the truth of each Prophesie, and how the Mysteries, Figures, and Characters thereof are to be interpreted, understood, and applyed to their proper times, periods, States, Interests, and revolutions represented by them: But this first being more practical, and treating of divers Questions that are under dispute now in these days,

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days, I thought it fit to let this see the light in the first place, to try how it will taste upon the pallates of the godly ingenuous; for if it savours well with them, it will suffice, and be a farther encouragement unto the second. I know I shall not please all in this Writing, neither was there ever a Writer with whom all have been satisfyed; for according to the Poet,

Ad captum Lectoris habent sua fata Libelli.

Books do either hit or miss,

As the Readers Judgement is.

Neither indeed was it in my thoughts to endeavour the satisfaction of all, well knowing that there are some so prepossessed with prejudice, or at least so wedded to their own concents, that it were the greatest unreasonableness and seruity in the World, to captivate ones reason to the satisfaction of their overweening folly. It was also far beneath my Designe to accommodate my Writings to the popular applause, and as the Tragedian says, Populo ut placent; who commonly weigh not the matter by the truth and Scriptural reason, but by their own irregular fancies and affections: and therefore am far from their humour, who Nil rectum reputant, nisi quod placuit sibi ducunt.

Next I shall acquaint the ingenuous Reader, that if any of my conclusions recede from the truth of Scriptures, I could willingly wish all such an abortion in the very birth. But if any thereof seem only to discede from the common received

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Opinions: let the Ingenuous consider, So long as they are Warranted by the Authority of Scripture and Reason, I hope I shall not want a Protector, or a sufficient Defence and Apologie.

I have no more to add in this way of Apologizing unto the Reader, but if he be a friend unto the Truths herein discussed, I wish him a farther increase of Divine light: If he be malevolent thereunto, all the harm I wish him, is a better Spirit, and a more enlightened Judgement: If he be supine and negligent, I wish him to add diligence and prayers to God for a right enquiry: If he be ignorant, I wish him a greater measure of true light and sound knowledge: If he be spiritually judicious and learned, I wish him to search and enquire diligently (true Berean-like) whether things are so or not, and declare it forth unto others: So shall he deliver his own soul, and his Brethrens also from the snares of death. To all which (at the Close of all) I say Amen: Who am

*Kerris in Cornhill, Thine
Wal, Nov. 11, 1658. In all Christian services,
John, Isaak, and Jacob, and
William Hicks.*

The Preface.

GOD spake at sundry times in old time to our Fathers, after a diverse manner by his Servants the Prophets: but now in these later dayes hee speaks unto us by his Son, and his Ambassadours, the Apostles and Ministers of Christ: And hee that would desire to know the minde of God towards his people and Church, may by the blessing of God, and the Spirit of Grace moving on his endeavours, in searching, meditating, and inquiring into the Word of God, (both Old and New) not only finde out that Treasure (where out floweth both New and Old things) that will make his soule wife unto salvation; but also hee shall finde a treasure of wisedom that will replenish his soule, (whiles here beneath in all the changes of this World,) with a great deale of Peace and Comfort. For what will add greater hopes, or be a surer prop to a soule in the time of its Affliction and mournings, then to fore see, know, and be assured, (next to its interest in Christ) of the day of its deliverance? This hath been the Ordinary portion and Lot of every soule that is truly Interested in Christ Jesus thorow their severall Generations, for the Servant must not look to be greater then his Master; Christ entered into his glory by Sufferings, Temptations, sorrows, and the way of the Crostle; his members must drink the same cup with him, whiles here militant, though not, to the same measure, nor to the same ends; for herein they are not made mighty to bear: his sufferings were to give satisfaction to Divine Justice, that hee that knew no sin might be made sin for us, that we thereby might become the Sons and Children of God. Our sufferings are for the Exercise of our graces, and to fullfil the remainder of the sufferings of the Mystical Body of Christ in our selves, in our Journeying towards our Celestial Canaan. And this hath not only been the portion of particular members but of the whole Body, the true Church of God in all ages, as appears by the History thereof. Yet notwithstanding, our gracious God to manifest his Fatherly oversight, and faithful providence and goodness, which hee without Intermission dispenseth towards his Church and people, hath often, for a Comfort to the Godly, and warning to the

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the wicked, not only delivered them from their oppressours, and set them above them; but so prefixed the time of their distresses and deliverances, that both they and their enemies themselves, in observing the events, must needs acknowledge the All-wise hand of Gods providence, to the one for good, to the other in wrath and Judgment. God hath promised hee will not be angry with his for ever, God hath his accesses and his recesses, his cominges in, and his withdrawings towards his Church: Some are conditioinal, as if we keep with God hee will be found of us; but if we forsake him, he will forsake us. Some againe are absolute, and out of Sovereignty, as that, *I will be found of them that sought me not, &c.* Yet however, Gods purpose of doing good to his Church is so stedfast and unalterable, that though many of them run upon the performance of some precedent conditions or qualifications in his people, yet he will in faithfulness perform his promises towards them in their deliverance, either by making them a fit people for so great a mercy by working the condition in them, and so will make them a willing people in the day of his power: or otherwise rather then any of the promises shall fall to ground unaccomplished will do it absolutely of his good will and pleasure.

1. Before the Floud God gave 120. years respite to the old World before he would execute his Judgment upon them, *Gen. 6.3.* When this time was expired his Spirit would contend with them no longer, but God came with the Floud and destroyed all living, except *Noah*, and what was with him in the Ark.

2. God declared to *Abraham* that his seed should bee a stanger in a Land that was not theirs, in *Egypt*, and should serve them and they should afflict them for 400. years, but withall that Nation whom they should serve hee would judge, and afterwards they should coine out with great substance, *Gen. 15.13,14. &c.* Which promise God did fulfill most faithfully unto them in its due time, and after the expiration of the said Terme hee brought out his people with a mighty and strong Arme, in drowning the Host of *Pharaoh* in the red Sea.

3. To that Captivity in *Babylon* God sets a period of 70. years, *Jerem. 29.10.* when that time was accomplished; God stirred up the Spirit of *Cyrus* King of *Persia* to let the people go.

4. To *Daniel* God shewed, that 70. weeks, *viz.* weeks of years being 490. years were to bee determined, in which time the *Messias* should come and be cut off, and at length the City of *Jerusalem* destroyed, *Dan. 9.24,25, 26.verses.* And how all these things were fully accomplished is most evident to every one that knows any thing of Gods dealings towards his Church and people.

5. In like manner there is a certain time set and determined upon the Church of God in the new Testament, how long she shall

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shall be exposed to persecution and when she shall be delivered from it, which is expressed in the Prophet, *Daniel 7. 25.* and the 12.7. They (the Saints) shall be given unto the fourth Beasts hand untill a time, times, and the dividing of time. Which Propheticie of *Daniel* does answer that of *Rev. 12.14.* The Woman which is the Church of God shall be in the Wilderness and trodden under foot by the power of the Beast for a time, times and half a time, which is to say, as it is explained in the sixth verse of the same *Chapter 12.60.* dayes or years, which terme for the comfort of the Saints the power of the Beast cannot exceed. For he that hath set a bound and period to all Kingdoms and Empires in this World hath said it, *bitherto thou shalt go & no farther.* And that Angel in the Prophet *Daniel 12. 7.* held up his right hand and left hand to Heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it should be but for a time, times, and half.

It being then clearly evinced that God will in his appointed time visit his Church with sure mercy, and having prefixed in all ages the time and continuance of their Distresses and persecutions, and that in the day of his visitation, he will come with a certain deliverance to his people, and ruine to his enemies: it is matter of great Joy & comfort to his people to be forewarned of this time, & fore see it though long before it come to bear up their Spirits in there greatest afflictions and distresses: *Abraham* saw Chri stis day and blessed God, though seeing it afar of by faith. This God hath more especially done in this Book of the Revelation, it being a discovery unto the Apostle *John* in Prophetical representations and Hieroglyphique figures of all the Empires, States and Kingdoms, both Ethnick and Antichristian, with their severall usurpations and oppressions over the Church of God, which should happen from *John's* time unto the end of the World, together with the issue thereof; the finall destruction of the one and the exaltation of the other before the ultimate end of all.

But here by the way it will be objected and said that this Book is full of hidden mysteries and sealed, and very difficult to be understood, and therefore most of those that have espoused their studies to the opening of this Book, have come of with losse in their over bold undertaking.

1. I Answer this Book of the *Revelation of S. John* is indeed full of mysteries which will so remain untill the accomplishment thereof do discover them unto us, and make them manifest: But when we by the observation of the events do see before our eyes the effect of each Propheticie, and what by this and that thing hath been meant, it is now no longer a mystery unto us. It is now obvious to every eye what is meant by mystery, *Babylon* the great, the Mother of Harlots, *Rev. 17.6.* This the Spirit of God doth clear up in the same Chapter to be, the City with seven heads (c) reigning

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raigning over the Kings of the earth : And few or none do hesitate, but do acknowledge, yea even the learnest of the Jesuites themselves as Bellar. *Lib. 2. de Pontif. Rom. Chap. 2. Blasius Viegas in Chap. 17. 18. Apoc. 5. Sect. 3. Ribera. in Apoc. Ch p. 14. Page 144. &c.* That by this great City here is meant Rome, likewise, all interpreters of the Reformation do harmoniously accord that by the Beast of seven heads and ten horns, *Rev. 13. 1.* must be meant the Romish Empire divided into ten Kingdoms. And the Beast with two horns like a Lamb, *Rev. 13. 11.* yet speaking like a Dragon, to be the Popish Antichristian Hierarchy, and if events hath plainly evidenced these without contradiction so to be understood and interpreted, as in the progresse of this discourse will more fully appear, why then should it seem strange that the residue of the mysteries of this Book should be unlocked and made obvious as well as the former ? Since the Spirit of God is felt in the 17. Chapter hath laid the first ground work, from whence as from a sure foundation we may have a view of the whole *Revelation*, by collating Histories, times and passages one with another, and lay them to their several characters and periods which the Spirit hath affixed to every remarkable revolution, passage and Prophesie in this Book as a sure token and touch-stone to finde them out, and make them manifest. So that now the *Revelation* is no longer a mystery, but a Book of History of memorable Acts and passages. Wherein is fore told the several changes that shall befall to the secular State or Romish Empire, and to the Church of Christ under the Dominion of that Empire, untill it shall, as that stome prophesied of in *Dan. 2.* Smite the Image on his feet and become it self a great Mountain and set up upon the top of all Mountains. And if we compare the Histories and changes that hath hapned in the Romane Empire with the *Revelation*, we shall discover clearly how far the accomplishments reacheth, and what we may expect ere long : So that the things represented in this Book are no more mysteries and hidden things, but as clear and accomplished Acts unto us.

2. The very Title and first entrance into the first Chapter, first verse of this Book denies it to be a hidden mystery, no farther then before the events do discover themselves ; for it is called the *Apocalypse or the Revelation of Jesus Christ* which God gave unto him to shew unto his Servants which shortly must be done, which hee sent and shewed by his Angel unto his Servant *John*. Besides it is contrary to the clear letter of the Text that it should be a Book shut and sealed ; for in the 6. Chapter *vers. 8.* The Lambs is found worthy to open the sealed Book, and so discoveries are made unto *John* : and by him to all the Church of God.

3. That little Book mentioned in *Chap. 10.* which more especially

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cially containes the fate or destiny of the Church to the end of the World was an open book, and the Son of God in the end of the *Revelation*, *Chap. 22. 10.* plainly prohibith to seal the sayings of the Prophesie of this book for the time is at hand.

Therefore this hence clearly follows, to set a check upon our supine and overly looking on this book : We would rather have it sealed and hidden, (though the Son of God testifies the contrary) then to bestow our industry with the help of the Spirit of God to leeks out the minde of the Spirit in it. Truths are like treasures got by the forest labours, are most sweet and precious, but with all such flowbellies that think there is a *Lyon* in the way, I leave with them these considerations. Is it the Book or Word of God or not ? If it is (as I hereafter shall clearly evince) then study it, Some good will come to the soule by it : No Word of God is of private interpretation, or written in vain, it will stand in great stead. Yea in the *Alpha* of this book and the *Omega* thereof, in the first and last Chapters, there is a blessing stored up for them that read, and they that learn the words of this Prophesie, and keep thole things which are written therein, for the time is at hand, *Chap. 1. ver. 3.* and *Chap. 22. ver. 7.* And shall there a blessing be promised to all these that read, hear and keep the words of this Prophesie, and he that hath promised being most faithful to perform ? Yea these things saith the Son of God, who hath his eycs like unto a flaming fire *Revel. 1. 18.* These things saith hee that is holy and true, *Chap. 3. 7.* These things saith the *Amen*, the faithfull and true wittnesse, *Chap. 3. 14.* And so closes in the last Chapter *ver. 6.* that these sayings are faithfull and true, Heaven and earth shall first pass away before one iota or tittle of the Word of God, shall fall to the ground unaccomplished, I say shall there a blessing be promised upon so faithful grounds, and wilt thou not look after it ? I should judge blessednes worth the looking after seeing that hee that hath promised is most ready, willing and able to perform.

But if it demanded, what is the advantage ? what is this blessing that may accrue in reading, hearing and keeping the words of this Prophesie ? I answer much every way, both to every particular soule and to the whole Church of Christ.

First if there were no more in it, but the detecting and making manifest of the Antichristian whore or state and the pollutious thereof, and so give a warning to all Gods people to come out of her, and not to partake of her iniquities least they be partakers of her plagues. Is it not a blessing to keep their souls undefiled from Antichrists pollutious, and to be delivered from judgments due thereunto ? Was it not a great blessing for *Lot* to be foretold and delivered out of the destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* ? So is it not a singular blessing and mercy unto us and the Church of Christ to be delivered, and freed from the divine wrath

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nexion which is to be observed in all the passages of this book, falling under the same synchronisme or concurrencies of times, indeed to such this Book of the Revelation must needs remain full of difficulty, mystery and obscurity: And so the whole order of the Revelation together with themselves are rendred inextricable and confounded. Whereas indeed the Spirit of God in this Book as a wise and well versed Historian is wont to do in the description of humane actions, does rightly distinguish of all the Revolutions and changes both of the civil and ecclesiastick states, and though many of them are done and acted together and at the same time by diverse and sundry Persons, yet cannot be declared together, but severally one after another. So these Prophesies though revealed and set down in order of place one preceding the other, yet in vain do they go about to interpret them that observe not the peculiar characters and hidden mysteries of numbers synchronising, and meeting in one and the same time: which is indeed the great key of the Revelation, which makes all the passages and Revolutions therein, though at the first sight they seem abstruse and disturbed, yet by collating one to the other they become plain and revealed to us, which in the subsequent discourse will manifest it self. And these have been some of the reasons that some former interpreters have come off with losse in their studies and expositions of this Book: when as they have applied diverse passages in this book, to their own times, when they had no relation to them: and sometimes interpreted as they are in order set down in the Book following one another, whereas they should be interpreted as they are *Relata* and *Correlata*, and belonging to one and the same time and period though dispersed here and there thorough the whole book, and so the harmony of the whole is kept some and entire. For wee see that the order it self is not to be conformed to every aptness of interpretation according to the will and pleasure, of the interpreter, but according to the minde of the Spirit of God made clear by the Idea of their several and particular Characters for explanation thereof affixed thereto. Now because some expositours have herein gone astray, must there no farther inquiry be made into this Book? This would be a way to cast of all the Books of God: for in which of them have not some expositours done amiss. There is no promise of infallibility, but there is a promise unto the latter dayes, that many should run to and fro, and knowledge should be increased: *Dan. 12.4.* do not arts grow in time to their ~~arts~~ and perfection? And is it any disparagement to those that went before us, that we see farther then they did? A pigmy upon a Gyants shoulder may see farther then the himself: So we being helped by the instructions and experiences of our predecessors upon their shoulders, it is no great advancing of our abilities if we soar a little higher. I would not be under-

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understood as if this my essay were perfect and so exact as nothing can be added thereunto: for herein I should balk our proper attribute; *Humanum est errare*, since others that come after us will see farther then we of this present age comming nearer to the accomplishment of the events of all. Only I leave this consideration and proposal with the judicious and pious Christian, that if he can finde out a more commodious method of interpretation upon better reasons and grounds then I have, for this Book of the Revelation, tuiting with the minde of the Spirit, and preserving the harmony of the whole Prophesies entire, and discovering the several passages and revolutions therein, how they do relate one to the other in their several proper characters, and synchronisms with more prospicuity and fitter application of History answering the truth of this Prophesy, I should most willingly become a learner at his feet: in the meane time, I shall add that of the *Poet. Horat.*

*Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti, si non his utere mecum.*

Object. Again others will object and say, *That this way of interpretation favours too much of curiosity and impertinency: And the application of the Prophetical representations, and of the Apocalyptic dayes and periods to the several times, and changes of the Church and State here on earth, is too precise and peremptory.*

1. To which I answer, first I affirme no more in this interpretation, the text being not at all forced; but as it is either literal or figuratively referred to the times and states then in being, and that interpretation made clear and undeniable, by such necessary and sure arguments characters and notable tokens, as will make the true sense and meaning of every notable mystery obvious to every discerning ey: And herein I walk not alone, having *Ma Brightman, Napier, Piscator, Alsted, and learned M. Mede*, with some others in their several tractates, upon the Revelation, to be my leaders herein.

2. Those figures and representations which makes this interpretation dubious, difficult or mysterious, being cleared out of the other places of the Revelation, and the Prophets of the old Testament; which being rightly applied to the civil and ecclesiastick States as the text and time doth require, should wipe of the brand of impertinency, and curiosity: what God hath sanctified no man shoulde call unholie, what God hath revealed, no man shoulde judge himself too curious and impertinent to search into; Unrevealed things pertain unto God, but revealed things are for the use and good of man.

3. I answer to the pertineness of the time of the Apocalyptic

time

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ique periods, though I will not herein be too peremptory, well knowing that in matters of History & Chronology, there is great variety of opinions and imperfection therein, as it is manifest in *Scaligerde Emendatione temporum*, and other accounts also treating upon the same subject: yet all this doth not hinder, but the times and periods are fixed in the predetermined Counsels of God, which are higher then the Laws of the *Medes and Persians*, unalterable and unchangeable. And though notwithstanding there is difference and imperfection in most accounts of times, yet by a regular judgment drawn from the visible tokens, characters, image and representation of each time, which are either concomitants, contemporaries or immediate antecedents or consequents of each great revolution and change: we may judge their periods either to be past, drawing nigh at hand, or yet to come. And this is no more then Christ himself hath done in setting down remarkable forerunning as Signes, of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and his least comming in the 24. of *Math.* and the 13. of *Mark*.

But I would desire alwayes to be understood, when I set down the exact epacts and periods of time, it may vary as unto us in preciseness of account in respect of the imperfection of our Chronology, but long time it cannot miss, every notable revolution and season having their own proper characters and tokens, to point them out as it were with a finger: which will notably help us peremptorily to conclude (in the foresaid limited sense.) This time is the time of Antichrists birth and rising: this of his reign, this of his ruine and desolation. Consider to this end that of the Angel in the Prophet *Daniel*, *Chap. 22.7.* Who held up his right hand, and left hand unto Heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever, that it shall be for a time, times and half. And the Son of God in the Revelation 13. 14. hath shewed that the Beast and false Prophet shall have power over the Saints for 42. moneths, and that the time of the woman in the Wilderness, and the time of the witnesses Prophecyng in sackcloth to be 1260. dayes. These things saith the *Amen*, the faithfull and true witness: who would not then believe him? Seeing that Antichrists reign, and the time of the Saints mourning is in the Eternall decree of God limited and prefixed, and that which the Angel and the Son of God do testifie with a great oath, we have no reason to doubt of, but that they will come to pass in their several periods and appointed seasons.

Again, against the definite demonstration of the last times, and seasons and the great changes and revolutions, held forth in this Book of the Revelation, two Scriptures offer themselves, that of our Saviours to his Disciples in *Mark 13. 32.* speaking of the last day and of his second comming. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the Angels which are in Heaven, neither

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the Son but the Father, the other is that of the *Act. 1.7.* Wherein Christ answereth his Disciples question, wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom unto *Israel*? And hee said unto them it is not for you to know the time and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power, so the objection lyes thus: If no man, no not Christ the Son of Man, nor the Angels of Heaven knows the last day, but that times and seasons are left alone in the power of the Father, how then commeth it to pass that there is a discovery of times and seasons, and of the last day it self and end of all made out unto *John*, in this Revelation by Christ himself?

I answer first, we must know that in Christ, there was two natures distinct and unconfounded to make up one Person of a mediatour, and the property of each nature did remain entire unto each: hee was true God and true Man: and as hee was Man or the Son of Man, it is no derogation at all unto him to affirm that he knew not all things, and that according to the understanding of Man to be ignorant of some things, and so of the last day. But to affirm it as he is God being one in Counsel, nature, and essence with the Father from all eternity, it would be no less then blasphemy to affirm it, for shall the Creatour of all things be ignorant of his handy-work?

2. It was not the injunction or command of his Father on him whiles he conversed here on earth, to discover unto the World what should happen in the latter dayes. Of the same comfort is that Scripture, *Mark. 10.40.* being an answere to the Sons of *Zebedee*, to sit on his right hand or his left was not his to give, yet in *Revel. 3.21.* he promiseth to him that overcometh that he shall sit down with him in his Throne. This Scripture gives a fair light to an interpretation of the former: for whiles he was here beneath perfecting the work of our redemption here on earth, the Revelation was not given unto him, from the Father to discover times and seasons: nor to give Thrones, Powers and Kingdoms into the hands of his Saints, untill after his resurrection when all power was given unto him by the Father, and all things were then given into his hand by right of purchase. And this is that that is clearly intimated in the *Revel. 5.9. &c.* When none was found worthy to open the Book, then the 24. elders before the Throne sang a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seales thereof, for thou wast slain, and hath redeemed us to God by thy blood of every kindred, tongue, people and Nation. The opening of this book being as it were referred to the merit of his death and passion, so that it should not seem strange that he knew not the day of his second comming, neither having not as yet suffered nor entered into his glory. The Revelation of all things being reserved by the Father for Christ unto that day.

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that is gone out against spirituall or misticall *Babylon*?

2. Is it not a great priviledge and blessing to the people of God, to know the catastrophe and result of all their troubles, and to have a sure word of Prophesie, for their deliverance from the oppressions and cruelties of their enemies, and that they shall one day triumph over them to their vtter ruine and destruction? Is not this able to beat up their Spirits in all their fiery Tryals, to see that their deliverance draweth nigh? Is it not a blessing in the day of affliction, in the day of mourning to be kept faithfull witnesses unto our God? And though Satan and his depurated Antichrist have power over us to overcome and afflic us, yet we are these that are sealed in the foreheads with the mark of the Lamb?

3. Is it not a blessing to know that Antichrists raign is but 42. moneths a certain definite time, which is now drawing to its period? Is it not a blessing to know that the time of the woman in the Wildernes, and the witnesses mourning in sackcloth, the treading down the true Church of Christ and the Professours thereof is but for 1260. dayes, which term is also neer expiring? Is it not a great blessing after all the troubles and afflictions of the Church and Saints here on earth to be assured, that Christ their head with Myriads of his Angels and Saints departed, will appear to the finall destroying of all their enemies and giving them peace and rest, causing them to raign on earth.

Lastly, is it not a great blessing to have a promise of the enjoyment and Communion of Christ and his glorified Saints, here on earth for a thousand years? When mortality shall put on immortality, when we shall see and know all the mysteries of God in Christ as we are seen and known, when that which is perfect is come, that which is imperfect shall be done away, when we shall see no longer in a glass, through weak and dark ordinances, but then we shall see face to face, when all our ordinances will be in a higher and more spiritual key, when sorrow, sin, and death shall be swallowed up of victory, when we shall walk in the light of the new *Jerusalem* the Lambs Wife that comes down from Heaven, wherein dwelleth true righteousness. And shall all those things be discovered in this Book of the Revelation, with a promise thereof, and of blessednes to all those that keep the words of this Prophesie, and yet will any be so stupid to conclude, that this is a dy useles book? That treats of Christianity from its very rise to the consummation thereof, full fraught with abundance of usefull Observations to steer our feet aright in our militant course here, untill we shall all come to the full stature of Christ.

And whereas some say it is a most difficult Book to interpret, and that many able Expositors have come off with los in their studies about it.

I answer

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I answer first, that all things to the slaggard indeed are difficult; The pith, marrow and substance of the Revelations is not to be found out by a cursory reading thereof, it is not obvious to every ey: And this is intimated in that 3. vers. of *Chap. 1.* wherein is observable, that blessednes is entailed to reading, hearing and keeping the words of the Prophesie: it is not a bare reading or hearing that will entitle to this blessednes, but it must be keeping, treasuring up, pondering and digesting before it will produce the happy fruits of blessednes. Indeed there are, *ta Babie*, the depths for Elephants to swim in, as well as shallows for Lambs to wade thorough in the Word of God, as God hath dispensed various gifts and abilities in his Saints, so God hath sowne in his Word several measures of truth suitable thereunto, none may complain for want to exercise their Spirits in. The weakest may see so much as shall make him wise unto salvation, and the highest capacity can attain no more; and when it hath done all yet it must needs confess that it is not omniscient; but that there are some mysteries in the Word of God, that will be still mysteries unto it until the day of the Revelation of Christ shall come, wherein hee will teach us all things.

It was a saying of Prospers, Parvuli, magni, fortes, infirmi, Habent in Scripturis unde alantur & satinentur.

No age so young which Scripture doth not fit,
There's milk for Babes, and meat for stronger wit.

2. It is difficult to all such that are not versed in the old and modern Romane Histories, not knowing how to apply the figures and representations of this Prophesie to their several times and periods: Neither knoweth how to distinguish the times of the revolutions and changes, but confound several things spoken of diverse States one with another: Not observing where mention is made of the secular or civil state, and whereof the ecclesiastick, conceiving that the Revelation is as a continued History, or Relation of events succeeding one another in the same order and cause as the visions are reveiled in: And for want of due observation herein many interpreters have stumbled, and so confounding, perverting and disturbing the whole method and harmony of the Revelation, in making several epacts and periods of time, so placing things which must come to passe after the destruction of *Babylon* and the Beast before it. Whereas the passages of the Revelation are so related one to the other, though written in order one after another, that many thereof do concur in one and the same time, so that hee that goeth about to describe them in order of time as they lye in the book, in order of place, without the observation of the method, or harmony and connexion

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3. That place of the *Acts 1.7.* is nothing to the purpose. It was not for his Disciples to know then the fittest and most meet time, which God thought good at that time not to make known, to restore the Kingdom unto *Israel*, he doth not answer them that he will not restore the Kingdom unto *Israel*. But it was not now fit for them to know the time and season thereof, Christ here speaks of *de tempore Tempestivo*, of the opportune and fit time and seasons, which the Father does reserve in his own power, and will not reveale unto his people.

4. I answer that in this essay, I do consider the time of the rise, progresse and period of Antichrist and other the great events, Syncronizing with the same in an Indefinite and more general way, not in an exact, definite precise day and hour, here I only consider the years in a more general way, which now the Father hath not reserved as a secret in his own power, but revealed them to us by his Son in this of the Revelation and other books of God.

Lastly accounting it as labour lost to answer the vain interpretations and glosses of the allegorizing and Chymical Scripturists, to wit the Familiistical Notionists, who can extract *quidlibet ex quilibet*, and so make the Revelation indeed a mystery and book sealed to the wisest Christian, therefore I shall not at all meddle with them, when as they interpret according to the miscal fanies of their own confused brains, and not according to the least measure of sound knowledge. For indeed if this book be not opened according to the Propheticall visions, with their peculiar characters rightly applied to their several times and seasons, we shall not know what tollerable sense or exposition to set upon it.

It is well that the Spirit of God it self doth clearly discover, and demonstrate in the 17. Chap. the beast with seven heads and ten horns to be a government or Empire, that should arise under ten Kings: And that mystery of *Babylon* the great, and the woman sitting upon many waters, to be that great City situated upon seven hills, and which doth reign over the Kings of the earth. Now if the Spirit of God it self hath holpen us with this key to unshut in part the mysteries of the Revelation, it shoule not be accounted presumption in us to fall on the same method, in opening the rest of the Propheticall representations and figures of this book, when as the Spirit of God hath given us some first fruits thereof it self, as sure footsteps to tread in: From which discovery of the Spirit, we may as from a watch-tower, take a full view of the rest of the Revelation, and so a scanding of the whole book otherwise in it self inaccessible.

And that thy Servant, O Christ who in himself is too weak for such a work may be fitted in some measure, from thy self who art the Wisdom of God, and to whom the Revelation of all things

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things is given of the Father, because thou art found worthy, O do thou enlighten his minde with true Light from above: And remove all impediments, his iniquities out of thy sight, by the washing of thine own bloud, then thou maist discover thy minde unto thy poor Servant, being hallowed by thy self to a fruitful reception thereof: Grant O Christ that by thy favour and the guidance of thy good Spirit, he may diligently consider the mysteries of this Book, and that unto sobriety, and declare it forth unto others, that the Church of God, may receive some advantage by him. And if thy Servant, O Lord, hath herein through weakness, built any hay and stubble upon thy precious structure, O let it be consumed, but so as that thy Servant may be saved in the great day of the Lord God Almighty, but if any of thine receive good hereby, to thee for it, as most due, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty, be praise, glory and Dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

(d 2)

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ANTIQUARIAT



ПРОЛОГИЯ, OR, PRAECOGNITIA. I. before
THE REVELATION
OF
John the Divine.

CHAP. I. *W*hile I was in
VER. I. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which
God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants
things which must shortly come to pass, and he
sent and signified it by his Angel unto his ser-
vant John.*

His Book hath for Title, "Αποκάλυψις Ἰωάννου. The Revelation of John the Divine." And here in the Entrance, I shall take leave to insert some *προεπιστημα*, or preliminary discourses and questions, which are necessary to be discussed, before I enter upon the Exposition of the Body of this Book.

Quest. 1. Whether this Book of the Revelation of John, be of Divine Authority?
2. Whether John, who in the Title of this Book is named John the Divine, the Author thereof, be the same with John the Apostle, and Evangelist, the beloved Disciple of Christ, or some other person?
B.

3. In

3. In the last place, I shall give a compendious view and taste of the scope and designe of the whole Book.

1. Concerning the Divine Authority of this Book, I should say very little or nothing unto it, well knowing how dangerous it is to move Foundation stones, or to question the Authority of any of the Books of God, received reverently in the Churches of Christ from age to age, as the Canon and Rule of their Faith and Manners. If it were not that the Adversary of old took advantage by this artifice to hinder the growth, and cast prejudice on many of the Truths of God, and to weaken the comforts of his Saints, mainly cherished and supported by the Prophesies in this Book. The occasion of the first doubting of the Divine Authority of this Book: Hence rose, in that it favoured the pretended Heretic of the *Chyliaſts* or *Millenaries*, and their adversaries endeavoured to fater it rather on *Cerinthius* the Heretick, then the Apostle *John*, thereby, if possibly they might, not only enervate its Testimony, but quite shut it out for ever out of the number of the Canonical Books of God, that it might never do the *Chyliaſts* any service more. Vpon this ground *Hyrome* was the first that did most publickly call its authority into question, about the year of Christ 400. and that in pure opposition unto the *Millenaries*, the followers of *Justin Martyr*, *Tertullian*, *Irenæus*, *Lactantius*, and others of good credit and authority in the Church of Christ in that judgement. Secondly it became suspected, as *Erasmus* witnesseth, (who in this particular, and concerning other Divine Books also, was very unstable in his own Judgment) in that some of the ancient Greek primitive Christians did not receive the *Revelations* as of Divine Authority; and this *Hierome* himself also testifies: But on what slender grounds this came to pafs, I shall presently consider: And though it is granted that some ancient Greek Christians did not receive it, yet it was by others of the same age, and of the far abler parts, judgement, and integrity, numbred amongst the Books of God, and acknowledged to have the publike stamp of his Spirit on it. There was one *Caius* or *Gaius*, as *Eusebius* witnesseth in the fourth book of his History, who saith, That this Book was written of one *Cerinthius* an Heretique, who held among many other errors, That after the resurrection of Christ, his Kingdom should become earthly and sensual, wherein the flesh should be satisfied again in all manner of concupisces, for the term of a compleat millenary of years. *Dionisius* of *Alexandria* takes up this report from this *Caius* an obscure person, and (as is thought) was one of the heretical *Alogi*, who denied (as *Epiphanius* testifies) the Word of God; and on the false report of this *Caius*, *Dionisius* doubts of the Divine Authority of this Book: But *Hierome* takes up the same slender ground from *Dionisius*, and doth object it strongly. But I answer, it seems *Hierome* would admit of any slender testimony to the invalidating of the Authority of this Book, because this book was the great Fortress of his adversaries the *Chyliaſts*: yet however, though *Hierome*, and some others of suspected credit, and of obscure note, as *Dorotheus*, *Dionisius*, *Eusebius*, *Caius*, do oppugne it, yet *Epiphanius* was so passionate friend to it, that he

reckons

reckons them among Heretiques that did reject it; and *Justin Martyr*, and *Irenæus* of sounder judgement, and of singular piety, did not only approve this book as canonical, but wrote commentaries on it.

2. Whatsoever that *Caius* was that fathers the Apocalyps on *Cerinthius*, on whose report all his followers were misled, yet the relation it self holds not any resemblance of truth; for *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, and *Epiphanius*, who write very largely of the heresies of *Cerinthius*, and his successors, yet never mentions that he held this opinion of *Chyliaſme*, or the Kingdom of Christ on earth, which they could not be ignorant of; therefore this story of *Caius*, concerning him and his Apocalyps, is Apocryphal, and a mere figment, on purpose devised by the adversary, to lessen the authority of this book; see more at large hereof in *D. Homes, lib. 3. chap. 3. sect. 3.*

Further, if *Cerinthius* was the Author of this book, doubtless he would have besprinkled it with some other of his errors that were peculiar to him; as that of the creation of the world by Angels, denying of the Divinity of Christ, and affirming his generation to be only of the seed of *Joseph* and *Mary*, as is testified by *M. Baxter's* book of Infidelity, treating of the heresies of *Cerinthius*, *Carpocrates*, and their followers, page 129. &c. But in this book of the *Revelation*, there is not one word to this purpose, but rather the contrary strongly confirmed in many places thereof, as the subsequent discourse thereon will manifest. And lastly, If it were granted that *Cerinthius* held and expected a riotous and luxuriant Millenary, (which is now disproved) yet this of the Apocalyps hath not the least intimation thereof, but of a Millenary of rest and joy, in a higher, and more spiritual key then ever the Church enjoyed on earth heretofore: there is great difference between an earthly sensual reigne, and to reigne on earth: Saints may be on earth, and yet be most spiritual; so they may have a Kingdom here on earth, and yet a most spiritualized and heavenly one, which is fully confirmed in the 21, and 22 chapters of this book. And so I have answered the first ground of suspecting the divine authority of this Apocalyps.

Secondly, *Hierome* the great Antagonist of this book writeth, that many learned men spake very sharply against this book, and the whole matter thereof, as not becoming the gravity of an Apostle, being only a common history of things shaddowed under dark figures, and hard kind of speeches.

I answer, Rather it becomes and favours the excellency and authority of an Apostle, being directed to the then seven famous Churches of lesser *Asia*, carrying in it all along the spirit of Prophesie, and the very steps, sentences, and figures of the old Prophets, being full of pregnant testimonies of the Divinity of Christ, and of this perfecting of the work of our Redemption and Salvation by his continual Intercession, and providential acts of gubernation of his Church to the end of the world. I confess the book in the figures and expressions thereof is dark and mysterious, but that is not strange in propheticall writings, as in *Daniel*, *Ezekiel*, &c. It seemed good to God

to set us on diligence to enquire into the dealings of God with his Church and people, and not to over-slip the judgements of Gods providence, which are reserved in God's infinite wisdom unto their appointed times of discovery; that from generation to generation, his people and Church may be comforted and supported unto the end of all.

Thirdly, *Dionisius* aforesaid, Bishop of *Alexandria*, reasons very lightly against the divine authority of this book, when he saith, That it doth not suit with the gravity of an *Apostle*, to cast up so of his own name; since in his *Gospel* he never nameth himself, but only pointeth it out by some modest marks as these; The Disciple whom Jesus loved: But here in this Book, in his *Visions and Conferences with the Angel*, he hath never done with these kind of words, 1 John. This reason moved *Dionisius* to think that this book was rather set out by some other in his name, then by himself.

I answer, This opposition is but weak; for he that writes a *History*, or matters of *Doctrine*, as the *Gospel* is mixed of both, he need not often insert his own name; for the truth of that depends on its present verity, and other apparent circumstances, witnessed unto by the spirit of God in miracles, and its operations on the hearts of Believers: But it is far otherwise with the *Writers of Prophesie*; for that receives authority by the *Author*, who is known to be a *Prophet*; for in every *Prophesie* that foretelleth things to come, we must enquire, first who revealed it; and then, to whom it was revealed; that the person being known to be a *Prophet*, and to have divine *Revelations*, we may give credit to it: for otherwise, who would give credence or faith to any of the *Prophetical predictions*, or books of the *Prophets*, before they saw them accomplished and fulfilled? As to instance in the *Prophet Jeremiah*, who maketh mention of his name at least a hundred times; and the *Prophet Isaiah*, how oft doth he repeat these words, *Isaiah the son of Amos?* And in *Daniel's Prophesie*, we shall find his name more then threescore times repeated; yea, ye shall find *I Daniel*, about nine times from the seventh to the tenth chapter; and *Paul* when his *Apostleship* was called in question by some false Brethren, and to shew the excellency of his *Ministry*, how often shall you read *I Paul an Apostle* (not of men, nor by men, but) of *Jesus Christ?* And why should it be accounted strange, when *John* mentions not his name above five times in this whole book, and with that modesty, that none might doubt of the truth of this *Prophesie*.

Haying wiped off the objections that have cast jealousies and suspicions on these divine *Revelations*, I shall in the next place endeavour to clear the divine authority thereof, and add some testimonies for that end; and I doubt not, but that being cleared, there is no true christians but will receive this *Book of Prophesies*, but as the *Oracles of God*. The testimonies are of two sorts, either from without, or secondly, within the said book. Those from without, are the general consent of the churches of Christ in all ages, (excepting in the heat of contest, amongst some violent persons) to the receiving of them into the *Canon*: The *Councils of Laodicea*, the third *Council of*

of *Carthage*, and the *Council of Toletan* 5. cap. 16. decreed it to be received as holy and divine *Scriptures*. Secondly, it was so received by most of the ancient Orthodox Fathers, as *Justin Martyr*, *Tertullian*, *Cyril*, *Epiphanius*, *Lactanius*, *Irenaeus*, *Augustine*, and many others; and so this book is often quoted by them, as of divine authority in their writings: I shall add the testimony of our late *Assembly of Divines*, in their confession of *Faith*, set forth in the year of Christ, 1651. who do number this of the *Revelation* in the catalogue of the sacred books of God.

Secondly, There are other testimonies very radiant and pregnant within the said Book, to prove it of divine inspiration: First, In that it proceeded from so highly illuminated a person as *John the Apostle*, the beloved Disciple of Christ was, (which hereafter I shall evince) and being directed to the seven famous *Asian Churches*, and being by them left unto all churches unto the end of the world, as the last publicke Legacy of the spirit of God in this kind, must needs be from the special impulse of the spirit of God: seeing God would never suffer such a palpable deceit to be put upon the churches, and to continue so long without controul, and under his own name, so often reiterated in those *Prophesies*, if it were not from God himself, and by his Spirits direction, approbation, and providential preservation.

2. It is clear and evident that this book is from the spirit of God, in that it doth fully harmonize and agree with the other indubitable received books of God, that treat about the divinity of Christ, and the work of our redemption.

Thirdly and lastly, Seeing those things are evidently come to pass that this book of *Prophesies* hath predicted and foretold, as the destruction of the seven *Churches of Asia*, the dethroning of the *Dragon*, the rise, continuance, and the fall of the *Kingdom of the Beast*, and of the *Whore riding upon the Beast*, &c. with divers other events and contemporaries with the former, some whereof are long since evidently accomplished, and the rest to be expected in their determined times and periods; and to be sure that this is an infallible mark of a *Prophesie* coming from God, when we see it come to pass, consult *Deut.* 18, 21, 22, *verses*.

2. I proceed to the second *Question*, about the *Title* of this book, (having cleared and confirmed the divine authority thereof), to wit, who is the *Author* thereof? Whether this *John* the *Divine*, be *John the Apostle* and *Evangelist*, or some other person? First, They that oppose the first, do offer as their reasons, the unlikeness of the style and speech that there is between this book and the *Gospel of John*, and his *Epistles*; which two latter agree in style, and many points of doctrine, but this of the *Revelation* is very dissonant from them both. To which I answer, It is no marvel in the first two, of the *Gospel* and his *Epistles*, though he writ by the instinct of the spirit of God, as unto the substantial Truths contained therein, yet he was not so strict tyed up in the history of the *Gospel*, or in the *doctrines* thereof, and the *Epistles*, but was left at large by the *Spirit*, to follow his own expressions, which he wrote according to his own *genius* and *temper*, being

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being high and sublimate; but here in this book he must write those things wh.ch he had heard and seen, and were delivered unto him: besides, the Spirit in this Prophesie keeps somwhat the like and the same manner of expressions, characters, and method, as it did of old in the Prophets *Ezekiel, Daniel, Isaiah*, and others; that it might appear that the same spirit of Prophesie did joynly run through them all, and were endited by one and the same Spirit: so that this objection does not at all hinder, but that it may be *Johns*, the Evangelist and Apostle, notwithstanding the difference of the style in this of the *Apocalyps*, and others of *John's* writings,

Secondly, They that oppose, give as another reason (but unadvisedly) that in all the Greek copies, the Revelation was entituled not unto *John* Evangelist, or *John* the Apostle, but unto *John* the Divine. This rather proves the contrary; for indeed I should desire no better argument to prove it to be *John* the Evangelist's: for all the Learned know, that *John* was by excellency, and as it were by a peculiar prerogative, called by this name of the Divine, because it was as it were his peculiar office and work in his Gospel, to write and maintain the Divinity of Christ against those Heretiques that opposed it in his time, as the *Ebionites, Simon Magus, Carpocrates, Cerinthus*, and their followers: Yet withal, I must needs say, that this word, *The Divine*, in our language, is too narrow a word or expression for this Title Θεολόγος, which in the Greek is of more copious and extensive signification, which makes much that it was the Evangelist that wrote this book for the foresaid reason; because he was the great asserter and maintainer of Λόγος to be Θεός, the Word to be God; and therefore had this denomination either from his work, and so was entituled Θεολόγος the Divine; Or lastly, He acquired that peculiar Title to himself, from the high Divine Inspirations, and most eminent Discoveries he had from God, beyond any others of Christ's Disciples in thole his Visions; and so being very frequently and eminently conversant with God, he might justly acquire unto himself the Title of Ιωάννης Θεολόγος of *John the Divine*; but I rather think the former was the more genuine reason and ground of that Title,

In the next place in the affirmative, I shall endeavour to confirm, that this *John*, who is the subordinate Author of the *Apocalyps*, is *John* the Evangelist and Apostle: To this purpose, consider what is written cap. 1. 9. when *John* was in the Isle of *Patmos*, under banishment and affliction, for the testimony of Jesus, and the Word of God; that then he received his Revelations: which doth agree with all antiquity and ancient Fathers, who all testify with one consent, that *John* the Evangelist and Apostle was there banished. And secondly, as a testimony from the best Antiquity (as *Aretas* witnesseth) *Basil, Gregory, Cyril, Epiphanius, Ireneus, Hippolite*, and most of the ancient orthodox Councils, plainly avouched this of the Revelation to be *John* the Apostle's. This *John* then, the Author of this book, was the son of *Zebedee*, the brother of *James Major*, or the great, and the Kinsman of our Lord's, and his beloved Disciple, who was alwaies one of the three great witnesses with Christ in his most retired and eminentest

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eminentest actions and miracles of his whole life; who after Christ had accomplished the work of our Redemption on the cross, and was ascended, he followed the work of his Apostleship; and as Antiquity and Church history testifieth, having with the rest of the Disciples after Christ's ascension, received power from on high, and the gift of the holy Ghost, his Province fell in the lesser Asia, for the work of his Ministry; where it is very probable, that he not only preached, converted, and founded those several Churches, mentioned in the beginning of the Revelation, in the Cities of *Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Philadelphia, Sardis, and Laodicea*; but also it seemeth evident that he appointed Pastors, and Elders, and other Officers over those churches, by his Apostolical authority; as *Paul* and other Apostles had done in their respective Provinces: and this is somwhat clear, in that he received from God those several preadmonishments whch he is commaanded to write, and to deliver to the Angels of those churches, as unto his peculiar charge and children, begotten of him in the Lord, who in the time of the Emperour *Domitian*, about the year of Christ 84. wherein fell the second great persecution against the Christians, *John* was forced and banished from his church at *Ephesus*, to *Patmos*, a Mediterranean Island, and one of those called *Cyclades*, wherein he himself testifies, cap. 1. 9. that he received his Revelation during the time of his banishment.

Lastly, I conceive the Title of this book, *The Revelation of John the Divine*, to be a superadded Title, and not *John's* own; and yet of great antiquity, given it by some primitive well-meaning christians. My reasons for this opinion is, that the Title Θεολόγος or Divine, was not peculiar to *John*, more then the rest of the Apostles, at the time of his writing the Revelation, it being written some years before his Gospel; but his Gospel was written after his return from banishment, as *Eusebius, Prideaux* history, pag 27. and other Ecclesiastique writers testify: and for writing so divinely of the Word (which was God) in his Gospel, as is declared, he justly acquired the Title of *John the Divine*, and not for the Revelations, which was written before it. Another reason that justifies this opinion, is, that the first verse in the first chapter looks as *John's* own Title, written by himself, to wit, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, &c. and which was signified by his Angel unto his servant John*: Wherein he only modestly nominates himself by the Title of Christ's servant, *John*; and without any other eminent superadded Title, as *John the Divine*: which hath swayed my reason, that that first Title was given unto him for honours sake, and not took up by him himself.

Having done with the authority, and also with the Author of this book, I come to the third thing proposed to be considered, to wit, the scope, matter, and designe of the whole book, which I shall handle but compendiously, and more general, that I may not preoccupy my subsequent discourse.

This book of the Revelation is a book of Prophesies, wherein is a discovery of all such notable events and alterations, as should happen to the church of Christ, and her enemies, from her first rise, unto

unto the end of all, set out and described in Hypergraphique and Prophatical visions, which Christ hath signified unto his servant John: and is contained in it two general parts.

1. An admonitory Epistle, which is directed to the seven Churches of Asia minor, which is the subject of the three first chapters.

27. A general discourse of all the alterations which generally do concern q[ui]relate to the church of Christ, from 10th's time to the latter day, which is comprised from the fourth chapter to the end of the book.

Secondly, To whom it was given and delivered, and that was John, vers. 9.

Thirdly, To whom it was sent and directed, and that was particularly to the seven Churches of *Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, to Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea*, cap. 1. v. 11. and cap. 2. &c 3. throughout.

Fourthly, In this monitory Epitit is to be considered, what sins and errors they are admonished and reproved of.

**Sixthly, and lastly, The approbation of their well-doings, and of
such exhortation unto perseverance therein.**

their faith, with an exhortation unto perseverance therein.

3. In the second general part or discourse concerning the great alterations that happens to the church of Christ, and its adversaries: these most remarkable things, offer themselves to the observant eye.

4. An historical relation under the visions of seven sealed books, or sealed prophecies, in the 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 chapters, which principally concern the various successes, combustions, confusions, and ruin of the heathenish Roman Empire, and in the middest of their highest confusions, yet take notice of the providential preservation of the church of Christ under its hottest persecutions; and though might

the church of Christ under it hoult persecutions, and though it was
tily conspiring its ruine, yet preserved, fenced, and sealed by God.
32. In part of the eighth, and in the whole ninth chapter, under
the visions of the seven Trumpets, there is an alarum sounded forth
to the ruine of the then degenerated Roman Christian Empire, by a
seven-fold order of plagues; the four first being not so terrible as the
three last, being entituled the three Wo-Trumpets.

3. You may observe, as it were, a digression in the prophecy, and the plague of the sixt (being the second wo- Trumpet) was poured out in the ninth chapter, and the description of the severall and last Wo- Trumpet set off to another place, where the wisdom of the Spirit found it more conveniently to refer it; and in the tenth chapter, to fall upon the prophesie of the little book, which is as a preface and entrance unto the prophesie and discovery of the events and destinies that should befall to Christ's church until the end.

4. In the eleventh chapter, you may observe how therein there is a peculiar visible and full discovery of the state and progress of the church.

church of God, even from the time of this prophesie, unto the later day, and you may farther observe, that this vision of the open book, which principally relate to the church of Christ in this eleventh chapter, do most necessarily concur and connex with all other the visions and prophesies of the Revelation, concerning the secular powers under the Seals and Trumpets; for both do concur together, though under several characters and visions.

5. In the twelfth chapter, there is as it were a retrogration to a more particular, ample, and fuller discovery of the persecuted and afflicted state of the church of Christ, under the Kingdom of the great red Dragon, concurring with the prophesie of the six Seals under the idolatrous heathenish Roman Empire, until she had brought forth her man-childe, and the Dragon cast down and destroyed; yet she was not so freed from her afflicted state, but she was glad to fly into the wilderness, where the Dragon sends his floods after her of persecutions, besides errors and heresies, to overwhelm her if he could.

6. You may observe in the visions of the thirteenth chapter, the Dragon being dethroned, how he substitutes in his room the ten horned Beast, the secular Roman Empire divided into ten Kingdoms, which persecutes the woman being entred into the wilderness, and does the work of the Dragon, and of the former heathenish Empire against her. Yet that's not all, there is another two horned Beast joynly raging and reigning with the former, at one and the same time, which doth as much mischief to her as that secular Beast it self doth, being the Ecclesiastique and Pseudo-prophetical Beast, or Antichrist it self, who is the former Beasts great chaplain, Prophet, and Vicar general; who under pretence of Christ, and Christian Religion, having two horns like a Lamb, yet exercises the cruelty of the Dragon, and sets up again other under specious titles, the late abolished heathenish Idolatry, and tyrannous persecuting Government, like that of the Dragons, and so healeth the wound given to the first Beast. This Beast's tokens, qualities, and characters are herein described, that they that have wisdom, may know and shun them.

7. In the fourteenth chapter is observable, how during the reign of this antichristian beast, the faithful followers of the Lamb, by their continual publishing of the sincere Gospel of Christ, they bring ruine and desolation upon spiritual or mystical Babylon, the antichristian state and seat, set forth under the cry of the three Angels, but more particularly in the 15 and 16 chapters, in the visions of the Vials, and the effusions thereof, are the particular, gradual, and final ruines of the anti-christian Beast, with all the churches enemies, more fully set forth and manifested; at the pouring out whereof, the church of Christ being freed and delivered from all anti-christs oppressions, and idolatrous pollutions, she sings her triumphant song, the song of Moses.

8. In the seventeenth chapter, that those precedent prophetical Visions and Discoveries may not seem improbable, the Spirit it self gives the interpretation of the mystery of the great whore of Babylon, sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast of seven heads; and ten horns. The

Beast is the Roman Empire, divided under ten Kings, or Kingdoms. The woman harlot is the great City, to wit, *Rome* it self (which the Jesuites themselves cannot deny, as in the preface hereof is more fully manifested) which reigneth over the Kings of the earth, the mother City of all spiritual fornications: By this taste of the Spirit's interpretation, it plainly appears, that the whole Book of Visions are to be applyed and explained historically, and that every mysterie opens others to the discovery, even of the whole.

9. In the 18 and 19 chapters is but a more solemn reiterating of the execution of Gods wrath against the antichristian state, with the horror, anguish, and utter desolations that should befall it, and all the Churches combined enemies; whereupon the Church being now freed from all dangers, gives praise, power, and glory unto God. And in chap. 20. enjoys that happy sabbath of rest, that glorious reigne on earth for a thousand years; that great day of judgement beginning with the first resurrection, and determined with the last and universal resurrection of all the dead, when all Christs enemies shall be taken and cast into hell, to be tormented for evermore; and the Saints translated into the glorified estate, that heavenly City, the new Jerusalem, the spouse of Christ, which came down from heaven to reign with him for ever and ever.

10. In 21 and 22 chapters, you may observe the glorious description of this new glorified Church-state, which came down from heaven, set forth by most excellent metaphors and figures, wherein all spiritual delicacies, in a far higher pitch then the church ever yet enjoyed on earth, set forth unto us by such resemblances & figures, as is now most glorious to our capacities, and fittest to express such heavenly and spiritual matters; whereupon follows a conclusion of the properties of that glory, but never of the glory it self, and so of the whole prophesie, with a confirmation of the verity and truth thereof, until the accomplishment of all.

These things being cleared and premised, and having laid down a brief view of the scope and designe of the whole, I come, by Gods assistance, and with a spirit of sobriety, and with awe and reverence, to open in the next place the mysteries of the book it self.

Remove not the stone well laid.

THE



THE REVELATION Revealed.

Chap. I. Verse 1, 2, 3.

Ver. 1. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass, and he sent and signified it by his Angel unto his servant John.*

Ver. 2. *Who bare Record of the word of God, and of the Testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*

Ver. 3. *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this Prophesie, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand.*



Aving formerly by way of Introduction premised some things, and amongst the rest, who is the Author of this Revelation, and that is Jesus Christ; and therefore here it is called, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*; because he, as the Mediator of his Church, received it from the bosom of the Father, in an unspeakable manner, and made it known by his servant *John*, for the good and comfort of his servants, the Church and Saints of God, from this word or Title, *Αποκαλυψις*, or Revelation, you may observe,

Observe. 1. That this is a book of Truths and Prophecies not hidden and sealed, but made known and revealed for the comfort and edification of the church of Christ. It is a Revelation of things

and passages which must shortly come to pass, verse 3. And how with reason could a blessing be promised to the keeping of the words of this Prophecie, if it were not known what was to be read, heard, and kept? We have further the testimony of the Spirit for it, cap. 10. v. 8. That the little book was an open book, wherein is contained the great revolutions of the Church, until the end of all; and in chap. 22. v. 10. there is a positive command not to seal the prophesies of this book, for the time is at hand.

Observe. 2. From the Author of the Revelation, Jesus Christ, observe; That all good things that God hath in his counsel determined to bestow and give unto his Church, he doth give and bestow them in, by, and thorow Jesus Christ. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; the same yesterday, to day, and for ever: He was the Angel of the Covenant, and the keeper of Israel of old, and is the same to us for ever: It was he that bruised the Serpents head in the beginning, upon our parents first transgression, and it is he that is more then conqueror over all the powers of darkness, now, and for ever. He was the same spiritual rock and way of salvation to the Patriarchs of old, as he is now unto us, and none ever did or shall come to the father, or receive good from him, but in, by, and thorow the Son, who is the true light, that lightneth every one that cometh into the world; so that if Christ be yours, then all is yours, whether things present, or things to come, for Christ is God's. *1 Cor. 3. 22, 23.* Lastly, he is the high Steward, and great Dispenser in God's Kingdom; All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth.

Observe. 3. That that Prophecie which comes from so sure an Author as Jesus Christ, must infallibly be true, and come to pass: for he is, and always was the great Prophet of his Church; it was he that gave visions and Prophecies to the Prophets, *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel;* sometimes by his ministring spirits, the Angels; sometime by himself, in the appearance of the likeness of the son of man, *Ezek. 1. v. 26.* And all know, that their prophecies stood sure, and were accomplished in their respective seasons: But as unto the stedfastnes and faithfulness of this book of Prophecies, see what Christ himself testifies in *Rev. 3. 7. &c 14.* and in ch. *v. 6.* *These things saith the Son of God, who is the faithful and true witness;* therefore of most sure performance in God's appointed seasons.

From the words, *which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.* Observe.

1. That Christ's servants are very privie to Gods counsels, and knows much of his desigines. This Christ hath verified. First, From that ground of union which is between Christ and his members; for being once become his members or servants, then they in Christ, and Christ in them; and according to that, *1 John 2. 20.* *They have an unction from him that is holy, and they know all things;* so that they that have the Son, have the Father also; for they both

both are one in will, counsel, power, and essence, *John 17. 21,* *22.* *And the secrets of the Lord are with those that fear him.*

2. They know much of the mind of God in all the combustions, changes, and revolutions of this world. Many think that they come by chance, ill fortune, or for want of foresight in management of State affairs; but the servants of God know, that the hand of God is in all those revolutions and State-shakings, and that there can no evil befall unto the City, but that there is the providence of God in it, directing and over-ruling it unto its end; so that they do foresee, that this change, and that alteration in the world will come too, and can rightly conclude, that all tend (as in a chain of providences) to bring about God's great end, in the exaltation of Christ's Throne, and the pulling down his enemies.

Observe. 2. God reserved the more full revelation of all things concerning the changes and revolutions of the Church and State, and the end of all, unto the day of Christ's exaltation in glory. Christ on earth, was not so glorious as Christ in heaven; he had not so full commission to send out so much of his Spirit while he was on earth, as when he was in heaven, *John 7. 39.* So in like manner, it is no sin to say, that God had not communicated unto Christ's manhood, whiles here on earth, the compleat knowledge of times and seasons, and the end of all; for he is said to grow in knowledge; and therefore according to his manhood, whiles here on earth, might be ignorant in some things: But yet it is clear, the Father revealed it to him when he ascended into heaven, that he might reveal it to his Church, as the due reward of all his sufferings, *chap. 5. 9.* *Thou art worthy to take the Book, and open the Seals thereof, for thou wast slain, &c.*

Which must shortly come to pass. See ver. 3. on these words, *The time is at hand.*

And he sent and signified it by his Angel unto his servant John.

From these words you may observe, That God reveals these Prophecies, not immediately from himself, but mediately, and by instruments.

First, God gives this Revelation to Christ, Christ gives discovery, partly himself, and partly gives commission to his Angels for the same. Thirdly, The Angels instruct John. Fourthly, John directeth the same to the seven Churches. And fifthly, From the seven Churches, they are left to all the Churches of Christ, for information, unto the end of the world. The infinity of God, and the finiteness of creatures are not compatible, therefore God uses instruments suitable to our capacities, for discovery of his mind.

Observe. 2. From the Messenger or Angel, by whom partly this prophecie was sent, Observe, That Christ employs Angels in great services for his Church. Angels were the first publishers and preachers of Christ's birth, an Angel tells the Apostles that Christ should return in that manner they had seen him go up to heaven, *Acts 1. 11.* Angels tells Abraham and Lot what God would do to *Sodom;*

dom; Christ tells *John*, Rev. 22. 16. That he sent his Angels to testify those things in the Churches. The Angels are made ministering spirits for the service of the church, and their service is more manifest in these particulars.

1. They inform us of God's will, and God of our ways; they ascend and descend, *Zac.* 1. 11. *Gen.* 18. 19.

2. They oppose the enemies of Christ and his Church, *Rev.* 12. 7. *Dan.* 10. 20. *Numb.* 22. 22.

3. They execute the judgements of God upon his enemies, *Exo.* 12. 23. *Gen.* 19. 11. 13. &c. *Isa.* 37. 36. *Rev.* 16. throughout.

4. They defend the godly, both against wicked men, wicked spirits, and wicked practises, *Rev.* 7. 1, 2, 3, &c. *Psal.* 34. 7. and 91. 11. *Gen.* 32. 1, 2. 2 *King.* 6. 14, 15, &c.

5. Next after the spirit of Christ, they comfort the afflicted in their distresses, *Luke* 1. 30. *Acts* 10. 4. and 27. 24. *Dan.* 6. 10, 11, 12. *Luke* 22. 43.

6. They are God's reapers, and gatherers of God's elect at the end of the world, *Mat.* 24. 31.

From the person to whom this prophesie was sent, and revealed by the Angel, under this relation of his servant *John*; what this *John* was, is made fully to appear in the preliminary discourse unto the Title, it was *John* the brother of *James*, our Lord's kinsman, the beloved disciple, a great Pillar and Apostle in the Church of Christ, and yet he is here described under the title and relation of servant, not only so by right of creation, but of redemption, special right, covenant, and service.

From which observe, That to be related to Christ by way of service, is a higher priviledge then any outward relation to him. Better be Christ's bondman, then his kinsman; inward priviledges are more honourable then carnal; *Mary* was happier in carrying Christ in her heart, then in her womb. *John* glories more to be Christ's servant then his cosin, *Mat.* 12. 47, 48, &c. Christ professeth, that they are his kindred, who shall do the will of his father: and he that is related to Christ in grace and faith, is as sure of his love and acceptance, as any of his nearest friends or kinsmen.

Obseru. 2. It is man's greatest honour to be Christ's servant. It was a curse upon *Cain*, *Gen.* 9. to be a servant of servants; but to be Christ's servant, is not only free, but noble: *John*, though he was a great pillar, a prophetical Apostle, the darling Disciple, yet Christ calls him but his servant: *Paul*, though he were the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and so calls himself, and glories in the priviledge, and that he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews, *Phil.* 3. 5. that is, born of the ancient Hebrew race and linage, and one mighty in the Law, brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*, yet how often doth *Paul* inculcate in his Epistles, *Paul the servant of Jesus Christ*? *Rom.* 1. 1. *Phil.* 1. 1. &c. *Tit.* 1. 1. &c. *David*, a King, should rather glory to be a servant unto God, and a door-keeper in his house, then to live in the courts of Princes.

Obseru.

Obseru. 3. If the highest in repute and office in Christ's church be but servants, then not lords; the grave Apostles, *Paul*, *James*, *John*, are but servants, and would be accounted but as the Ministers of Christ, *1 Cor.* 4. 1. and not as lords and masters over the church's faith, *2 Cor.* 1. 24. *1 Pet.* 5. 3. Christ alone is the great Dictator and Imposer of Tyes and Rules upon the conscience of his people, *Math.* 23. 13. The greatest Apostle, Bishop, Pastor, or Elder, deserves but the honour of a Servant, Minister, or Steward in the church, not of a Lord and Master; their work is a work of service, to perswade, entreat, convince by reasons, not to impose, dictate, and compel: In short, they can impose nothing as necessary to be believed, done, and practised, which is not according to the mind of God; and that, neither in their own name, or for their own ends; for they are servants, not at their own dispose, but at the call, beck, and direction of another, even of their Lord and Master, Christ.

There is also somewhat to be considered in that, when Christ precisely sets down, and takes notice by name to whom he gives this Prophesie, *His servant John*.

Whence note, 1. That the truth of a Prophesie depends much for credit, on the credit and reputation of the Relator. *John* was Christ's beloved Disciple, most highly illuminated in the mysteries of the Eternal Word of God, *John* was a Prophet, and the last that had prophetical Visions, to a full discovery of the state of things to the end of the world, and therefore there is an Anathema gone forth against all persons that shall add or diminish from the words of this prophesie, in the 18 and 19 verses of chap. 22. for there is no other discovery of the state of affairs, then what is in this present book, to be expected until the end of all; and therefore the Spirit of God, in the second verse, the better to gain belief and credit unto the Truth of this prophesie, and unto the subordinate Instrument and Author thereof, describes his Excellencies, Offices, Gifts, and Qualities, in these words.

Verse 2. *Who bare Record of the Word of God, and of the Testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*

You have in the words ὁ ἐμαρτύρως μαρτυρεῖ, *Who witnessed a Record, or bare a sure Testimony*; and that of three things. First, Of the Word of God. Secondly, Of Jesus Christ. Thirdly, Of All things that he saw. Wherein two senses or Interpretations offer themselves to the view: Whether this Record be to be taken singly, as *John* was an Evangelist, and bare testimony of the Divinity of the Word, as one with God, and that Word was God; *John* 1. 1. and this Word was made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, and so bare record of all the acts and miracles which he saw this divine person do, and perform, through the whole course of his life here beneath. Or secondly, Whether this Record of the Word

Word of God, and the Testimony of Jesus Christ, and of the things which he saw, be to be understood of the Truth of the Word of God in this book of Prophesies, which Jesus Christ did testify unto, and was made apparent by Visions unto *John*. Indeed I shall willingly admit of both senses; and I am of opinion, the Spirit of God in this verse aims at both, for adding the better authority and credit to the truth of this book of Prophesies; and though the Gospel of *John* was not written when this Revelation was given, yet by his constant preaching, he might well be seen to bear Record of the Word of God, and of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

1. From the first sense, Note, That they that are the faithful Publishers or Preachers of the Word of God, and of Jesus Christ, gets best credit and reputation to all other their relations.

2. Another Note is, That they are fittest to receive Visions, or Prophesies from God, that bears the faithfulllest Record of the Word of God, and of Jesus Christ. *John* was now a prisoner, and under banishment, for the Testimony of Jesus, when he received those Revelations. *Paul* as a reward of his faithfulness in his Ministry, and Apostleship, had even here an irradiation, and taste of the heavenly glory, when he was wrapt up in the third heavens. The Prophets of old, *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, *Jeremiah*, &c. received those visions of God, high and excellent ones, because they were faithful witnesses of the Word of God, and publishers of it unto others; and the reason hereof is, because they whose minds are most conversant with God, and exercised in his Word, are fittest Instruments to receive and know the mind of God; for *omne simile, gaudet simili*: Every like desires communication with its like.

Verse 3. *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this Prophesie, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand.*

You have again the promise of blessedness made to those that keep the sayings of this Prophesie in the last chapter, verse 7: From which promise here in the entrance of the Book, and in the end thereof reiterated and made good to such as keep the sayings of this Prophesie, you may observe,

Observ. 1. That this prophesie is not altogether inaccessible, but to be understood of such as diligently enquire thereinto, by the help of God's Spirit. If the discovery of this Prophesie were not feasible, how vain would it be to promise blessedness to the diligent observers thereof! I conceive it would be very derogatory to the Divine Truth of God, to make such a supposition. Besides the sayings of this Prophesie are to be read, heard, and kept, and therefore most absurd to conclude that it is so hidden, as not to be understood in the scope, and substantial part thereof.

From the promise of blessedness, Note.

Observ.

Observ. 2. That this book of Prophesies contains most excellent and useful things to be understood, kept, and observed. How singular useful it is to foresee the coming either of the day of joy and triumph, or the day of evil and affliction! That our Spirits may be born up, and our hearts comforted under all conditions, in the certain hopes and expectancy of the one, and that we may not murmur in the other, but acquiesce under the hand of God in patience, until the day of the wrath of the Lord be past and over. This book of Prophesies is full of such discoveries, to wit, The afflicted state of the Church, its security in that condition, together with the rise of Antichrist, its reigne, pollutions, and a discovery thereof; and at last, its utter ruine and abolition; and the consequent thereof, the Restauration of the Church to glory. Judicious christians should account this knowledge excellent, it will much help to keep their spirits in a frame and temper suitable to their conditions: This will teach them to know, that this is a time of patience and tribulation, not of triumphing and reigning. While the Bridegroom is absent, the Spouse is under sorrow and mourning, not of mirth and rejoicing. The Scarlet Whore, or harlot church sits yet as a queen, and therefore the true Spouse sits mourning, yet still expecting the day-star to arise for her comfort and consolation. See more concerning the usefulness of this Prophesie in the Preface to this work.

Observ. 3. The contents and intendment of this Prophesie, is not obvious to every eye: Reading and hearing will not serve turn, there must be a keeping; that is, he that will read to advantage the things in this Prophesie, must read observantly, hear attentively, and at last treasure up in his heart what he hath read and heard, and so having carefully observed the contents of each Prophesie, with a right application thereof, he becomes most blessed and happy.

From the difficulty of the understanding of this Prophesie, observe 4. That the profoundest speculations, and the choicest truths, are hardest come by. It is a true saying, *Quod difficilimum, pulcherrimum*: Truths (as Treasures) that lye deepest, are sweetest. It is not unknown what knots there are in the choice doctrines of the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, Justification, &c. and yet most necessary to be known.

This informeth us several lessons.

1. To set a reverence upon the truths of God, for they are choice ones, not easily come by.

2. It sets a check upon our swelling conceits, as if we knew all mysteries, and the deep things of God; but we are creatures not omniscient: and it teacheth us, that many difficulties in the word of God, are the truths of God, though we know them not.

3. It quickens us to duty, and whets our endeavours to the attainment thereof. *Strive to enter into the strait gate.* Choice Truths, as heaven, must be taken by violence, and the violent takes them by force,

4. God hath hid some excellent Truths under the rocks, and laid them deep, that the greatest abilities and graces he gives, may be exercised therein; in the Word, there is meat for babes, and also meat for strong men: both have enough, that neither may complain for want.

5. Lastly, It drives us to God, and to pray with *David*, *Open thou our eyes, that we may see the wonders of thy Law.*

For the time is at hand. The same expression is in the last chapter, v. 10. which intimateth, that all ought to take heed to the contents of this Prophesie, because the time was then at hand, and drawing nigh, wherein all the predictions thereof must be accomplished, and wherein an entrance should be made forthwith unto the accomplishment of some, and so unto all the rest in their order, until all should be fulfilled. And in the first verse it is said, The things revealed in these Prophesies by Christ unto his servant *John*, must shortly come to pass.

Hence observe, That those prophesies began to be in force, and run out presently upon *John's time*, and so continues in all the ages since, until the consummation of all. This will be made good in the ensuing discourse, treating on the particulars.

Verse 4. *John to the seven Churches in Asia, Grace be unto you, and Peace from him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven Spirits which are before his Throne.*

Verse 5. *And from Jesus Christ, &c.*

John having discovered the Author of this Revelation in the first two verses, by whom it was given, and the Instruments by whom it was sent and received, and having confirmed it by a sure testimony, that it was he himself that did receive it, he goes on with a saluting preface to the seven famous Churches which were then in the lesser *Asia*, by way of an admonitory Epistle; wherein partly he commends and encourages them, partly he checks them; which will be manifested in the progress of the discourse, before he enters upon the relation of the Prophetical visions themselves.

From whence observe, That Christ's Ministers or Prophets, though they have a Burden, or Doctrine of Judgements and Wrath, to denounce against a people or church, yet they are in the first place to come with the doctrines of Grace and Peace in their mouths, with bowels of pity and compassion towards them. The work of judgements is as it were a work of abhorrency unto God; *Why will ye die, O house of Israel! How often would I have gathered and healed you, but ye would not?* It is God's method, a long time to exercise his patience and forbearance, before his wrath be executed: he will try all means in the first place by mercies, by providences, by deliverances, to win a people to himself: he will (as a good husbandman) many years enclose, dig, dress, and prune his

Vineyard,

Vineyard, in expectancy of fruitfulness, before he will hew them down, and cast them in the fire: He will abide long with his backsliding children; forty years long was he grieved by his gainsaying people *Israel*: yea, he will come down and see (as if formerly he did not take notice of their sins, hoping of their amendment by such forbearance) whether their transgressions be so or not, *Ezek. 33.11.* God takes a solemn Oath, *As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; Turn, turn, &c.* When God is as it were, by unrepentant sinners, enforced to withdraw his presence, and execute his judgements, O! how troubled is he at it? He doth it, as it were, step by step, *Ezek. 10.4.* When God withdrew his glory from the Temple, first it moved to the threshold, then towards heaven, v. 19. then to the midst of the city, and from thence to the mountain on the East side of the city, *cap. 11. 23.* and so at last went wholly from them. This sets a reproof upon such that come like *Baenares*, sons of thunder, with doctrines of judgments and wrath, before they have made experiment of the doctrines of peace and grace: That of our Saviour may be well applied unto them, *They know not of what Spirit they are of.*

Obser. 2. That all Christ's faithful Ministers, that desire the good of souls by their doctrines, are to pray for the encrease of grace and peace in God, and in our Lord Jesus Christ, and upon all their hearers: It is *John's* wish here to the seven Churches, *Paul* always in every Epistle to those to whom he directs them, *Rom. 1.7.* it manifests our charity and our duty, in praying for all, but especially for the household of faith.

Quest. What is meant here by wishing Grace and Peace?

Answ. Not only the gifts and graces of the Spirit, but Grace it self, the fountain and original of all good, even the good will, and free favour of God, which he bears to his Elect, even whilst sinners, in and through Jesus Christ: and Peace, which is not only happy success from God in all things which concerns the felicity of our souls and bodies; but more especially, reconciliation unto, and with God, from whence floweth all true peace and tranquility unto the mind and conscience.

Quest. How comes *John* to wish Grace and Peace to the seven Churches, whilst being churches of Christ, they had this Grace and Peace beforehand?

Answ. He wisheth unto them a fuller sense, and more plenteous fruits of this Grace and Peace, and perseverance in it; it seems by their backslidings, they had lost some of the comforts and fruits of their grace, and therefore need a supply from God;

Secondly. I answier, All Grace is not given at once to God's best children, but by degrees, and as they are capable of; and therefore rightly might *John* wish these Churches an encrease, and so may all Christ's Ministers unto all, that will ever want encrease of grace whiles here beneath; for none here in this world will ever see perfection in an absolute and abstract sense, and therefore will still have need of an additament of grace and peace.

D 2 You

You have here the Author or Fountain (to wit the Trinity) from which all happiness, all true grace and peace do proceed, even from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; that is, from that almighty glorious God, who only hath an absolute and infinite Being, in, and of himself, who was from all eternity, and is the same for ever.

And from the seven Spirits which are before his Throne,] Here is some difficulty in Interpretation, What is meant by the seven Spirits? Some interpret that here is meant seven principal ministering Spirits, or Angels, that always stand before the Throne of God, to receive his commands: But this I cannot approve of; First, because grace and peace is here desired from them, joyntly, as from God and Jesus Christ, to be bestowed upon the Churches; and this is not the Angels, or creatures work, but only the Creator's.

Secondly, For that in all the Epistles where there is mention made of this or the like salutation, you shall never find it in any created Spirits or Angels name, but only in this sort; *The love of the Father, the grace of Jesus Christ, the consolation or peace of the Spirit be with you.*

Thirdly, for that in chap. 5. v. 6. these seven Spirits are there called the seven eyes of the Lamb that was slain, which the Spirit sent forth into the whole earth. Which reasons do clearly convince me, that we must here in this place, and there also, understand this spoken of the Spirit of God, which here goes under the denomination of seven Spirits, to signify its seven-fold power, vertue, efficacy, and gifts, Rom. 12. For this mystical number of seven, do always in this book, and all other prophesies, signify completeness and perfection; seven Churches, seven Candlesticks, seven Seals, seven Trumpets, seven Vials, seven Angels, all signifying a perfection in their kinds.

Hence take this Note:

Obser. That the Father, Son, and Spirit, the whole Trinity, are engaged for the support and encrease of our grace and peace, and of all our joy, comfort, and happiness, here, hereafter, and for ever. From the Father more peculiarly flows the grace of Election; from the Son, the grace of Redemption and Satisfaction; from the Spirit, the grace of Sanctification, Peace, and Consolation: And from the Three in one, our God blessed for ever, Salvation, and Eternal Glory.

Vers. 5. *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the earth: unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*

Vers. 6. *And hath made us Kings and Priests unto God, and his Father, to him be glory, &c.*

Christ here is said to be the faithful Witness in sundry respects. First

First, In that he hath faithfully declared the Will of the Father. Secondly, In that he hath been faithful in all his works, about our Redemption, committed to him by the Father. Thirdly, In that he hath here faithfully declared the mind of God towards his church in these prophesies. From whence observe as before on vers. 1.

Obser. That this Prophesie having so faithful an Author and Relater as Christ, it must surely be true, and come to pass. If the word spoken by Angels was stedfast, much more what was spoken by the Son, Heb. 2. 1, 2. see more hereon, cap. 3. 14.

Christ is here called the first-gotten of the dead; first, because he was the first that rose by his own proper power from the dead. Secondly, because all that have risen, or shall so rise, does it by a derivative vertue and power from him. Thirdly, he may be called the first-born, or first fruits of the dead, because he is the true and substantial first-fruits that was offered up unto God, for the living and the dead; which was typified in the Levitical primicies, or first fruits, or first-born, that was offered unto God, 1 Cor. 15. 20.

Obser. This proves the Resurrection. If Christ be the first-born of the dead, then others of his members must necessarily be partakers of the resurrection also, 2 Cor. 4. 14.

Christ is here called the Prince of the Kings of the earth; first, as Head of his Church, or of Saints, who are called Kings of the Earth, Rev. 5. 10. Secondly, as King of Kings; so by him kings reign. This manifests his power and ability to bless us here with his grace, and at last to raise us, and to save us: and unto this mighty and powerful Saviour, who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us Kings and Priests unto God, that is, Kings and Conquerors, not only over our own lusts, but over the world, and over the powers of darkness, and Priests to offer up spiritual sacrifices unto the Father; To this gracious Saviour, who hath done all these great things for us, be given all glory and dominion for evermore, Amen. Hence Note,

Obser. That the whole work of our salvation is ascribed unto Jesus Christ, under these particulars. First, He loves us, that is, accepts our persons in himself from all eternity, and in time, justifies us from our sins in his blood. Secondly, He sanctifies us, by making us conquerors over our lusts, and to become actively zealous towards God in spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise. And lastly, he makes us Kings and Priests after the Resurrection, Rulers with Christ, and sharers with him in his Kingdom of glory. See more, cap. 5. 1.

Vers. 7. *Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him; Even so, Amen.*

He cometh with Clouds,] This is a Græcism; that is, In the Clouds. This verse hath an Index, or an Asterisme before it: *Behold,*

Behold, to show, that it is very remarkable what is here expressed, being as the general proposition unto the whole Revelation. Christ's coming in the clouds in power and glory to set up his Kingdom here on earth before the ultimate judgement. This hath relation to *Zachary 12. 10.* and promised in *Math. 26. 64.* and *24. 30.* and *Acts 1. 9.* &c. Several Interpretations offer here to the consideration: Some would have it here meant, that at the time of Christ's passion, this Scripture was fulfilled in these first fruits of the Jews conversion, in *Acts 2.* that were the crucifyers of Christ, being pricked to the hearts because of him, and of the evil by them done unto him, and so mourned over him. Though indeed it is granted that that prophetic in *Zach. 12.* is partly fulfilled in that of the first fruits of the Jews conversion, who truly mourned for him whom they had pierced; *John 19. 37.* yet *John* here in this prophetic, and in this verse, long after Christ's ascension, re-inforces, and takes up the same relation, to be fulfilled at Christ's second coming in the clouds; therefore that of *Zach. 12.* was never compleatly accomplished to this day. Secondly, These small numbers of the first effusion of the Spirit after Christ's passion, cannot with any sound reason answer that general and universal mourning, promised of in *Zach. 12.* where the several families of *David*, of *Nathan*, of *Levi*, of *Simeon*, &c. and all the families that remain, shall all mourn apart, or joynly, as they did at *Hadimmon*, in the valley of *Megiddon*.

Thirdly, That prophetic of *Zachary 12.* could not wholly relate to the time of Christ's passion, or little after, because in the day of the fulfilling of that prophetic, he would make the *Governour* of *Judea* like an hearth of fire in the wood, and like a torch of fire in the sheaf, and they shall devour all the people round about, and the Lord shall save the Tents of *Judah*, &c. ver. 6, 7. and in ver. 8, and 9. God would in that day make the feeble of the house of *Judah* as *David* for strength, and of the house of *David*, as the Angel of God: and that God would in that day seek to destroy all that came against *Jerusalem*. But in how contrary, low, and weak condition *Jerusalem* and *Judah* was in at the time about Christ's passion (being then under the Roman yoke) and ever since have been under a miserable afflicted estate, as all histories testify: And how unsuitable such a condition is with the fulfilling of the aforesaid prophetic, let the wise consider. Therefore sure this coming of Christ, must be intended of his second coming, future to his Ascension; for he was ascended long before this Revelation was given. *This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* *Acts 1. 11.*

Others again apply the time of this mourning and looking upon Christ whom they had pierced, wholly to be the time of the last and ultimate judgement of the wicked; when as they say, all they that crucified him, and all his enemies, shall mourn and wail for anguish, and tremble before him. But this cannot be the whole or main sense

of

of the Spirit herein, nor altogether according to the time thereof, for these reasons.

First, Because this time or day of mourning, is not of mourning to desperation, as that ultimate mourning of the wicked is, but it is a godly sorrow or mourning that leadeth unto repentance, compare it to *Zach. 12. 10, 11.* It is *as one mourning for his only son*, or *as that mourning was for good Josiah slain at Megiddo*; out of bowels of love and compassion, not of horrour and desperation, as the former is.

2. Another reason is, because in this day of mourning, there is promised, that God would pour out the Spirit of Grace and Supplications upon the Inhabitants of *Judah* and *Jerusalem*, *Zach. 12. 10.* unto which this verse does relate; but in that day of God's executing his last wrath on the wicked, is no time of pouring out of grace, nor the spirit of supplications; therefore to me it clearly follows, that seeing the Prophet *Zach. 12. 10.* and *John* in this seventh verse, both prophetic of one and the same personal appearance and coming of Christ in the clouds, especially intends the conversion of the Jews, of them that pierced him, and that before the ultimate judgement of all, for then there is no time of repentance or conversion.

3. The third reason is from the words; *And all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him: Even so, Amen.* If it were to be understood here only, that all the kindreds of the earth should see Christ's coming, and wail for dread or horrour, as the wicked at the ultimate judgement day, then *John* would never set such a heavy Amen to it. So it shall be; seeing himself, and all the Saints departed likewise, do expect and rest in hope for the sight of this his second coming unto their joy and comfort.

Therefore the conclusion or observation that arises hence, and as a right Interpretation of this verse, is,

Observe. That Christ will appear again in the clouds, to be seen of all, to the conversion of his ancient people the Jews, the destruction of all his enemies, and the restauration of all things, before the end of all.

And this conclusion and interpretation flows from these grounds or reasons. First, from the very genuine sense of the words themselves in this verse, *Every eye shall see him gloriously coming in the clouds: As ye have seen him going, so shall ye see him come:* *Acts 1. 9.* We see him now by the eye of Faith in heaven, but then by the eye of the body. Faith and sight are two distinct things; *2 Cor. 5. 7.* all do not now see him by faith, but then all and every eye shall see him coming in the clouds, to perform a double work; the one in a wonderful manner, to cause the Jews that pierced him, to look on him and mourn, even to a holy repentance; whose conversion will be so wonderful, that it wil be as a Nation born in one day, *Isa. 66. 8.* And this is no more then was done formerly towards *Paul*, Christ miraculously appearing to his conversion, and which he intimates must

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must likewise follow afterwards to Israel, in that that God shewed him this grace first.

Secondly, That all his obstinate enemies may look upon him, and mourn and wail, even to desperation; for that their ruine, and the day of God's great wrath is coming on them: for it is the work of Christ's appearance, not only to destroy all his anti-christian adversaries, 2 Thes. 2. 8, 9. but also to the joy, comfort, and exaltation of his Church, 2 Pet. 5. 4. Now this cannot be the work of the end of all, and ultimate judgement, because this of Christ coming in the clouds here, is set as the general result, and the main proposition of the whole of the Revelation; wherein the great designe is, to set forth Christ to come, and the glorious estate of his Church here on earth, before the ultimate end, as will appear hereafter: To demonstrate this a little plainer, I set these Queries out of *Zach.* 12, collated with this place, and that of *Matth.* 24. 30.

1. Was ever Judah or Ierusalem since that Prophesie, made to her enemies a cup of trembling? Was she ever a burdensome stone to the whole earth, to cut them in pieces? Have ever the Gouvernours of Judah been like an hearth of fire amongst the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf, devouring all the people round about? Or, Were they ever since that Prophesie of *Zachary*, in that strength, that the feeble amongst them were as *David*, and the house of *David* as *Elohim*, &c. Peruse the History of the Iews, and consider whether you can find the least accomplishment thereof?

I next quere, when was ever that eminent effusion of the Spirit of grace and supplication poured out on the house of *David*, and the inhabitants of Ierusalem, that they should look on him whom they had pierced, and mourn for him with great bitterness, each family mourning apart? Was this done at Christ's passion by the obstinate Iews his crucifiers? They derided him: Or was this fulfilled by the small number of the Iews, his Disciples, the eleven, who fled at his suffering? They did not pierce him: Or was this fulfilled upon those mourners in *Act*s 2? They saw him not when they mourned, nor with their families apart, nor saw him in the clouds, and thereupon mourn for him; and therefore as yet the main of this Prophesie is to be fulfilled.

Lastly, Is this to be referred to the last resurrection or ultimate judgement? I ask, Is that a day of repentance, of mourning, and of grace? That is a day of judgement unto the wicked, and then Christ's dispensatory Kingdom of Grace is at an end, 1 Cor. 15. 24. Therefore to be brief, and not to exceed due bounds, I assert, That here by seeing Christ coming in the clouds by every eye, and by them that pierced him, and that all kindreds of the earth should wail because of him, is meant by *John*, as *Zachary* meant, namely, that all the Tribes, both Iews and Gentiles, should see Christ coming in the clouds with glory, as man, before the end of all: to the Iews, and all his Elect, with grace and godly repentance; to the

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all other his enemies, with horrour and confusion: consult *Jer* 25. 5, 6. *Zach.* 2. 10, 11, 12. *1/4.* 2. throughout.

Object. But here it may be objected, That you make divers coming of Christ to judgement, the one to the conversion of the Iews, and the restauration of his Church to a glorious State and Reigne, in the destruction of their enemies; and another, or second coming again, before the final end of all things, to execute the ultimate judgement. But this is contrary to Scripture, which mentions only of two coming of Christ; the first in the flesh, in the time of the Gospel; and the last at the day of judgement, to execute the wrath of his Father on all his impenitent enemies, and the refusers of his Gospel.

I answer, Christ's coming in Scripture is variously taken; sometimes for his first coming in the flesh; sometimes in Spirit of grace, power, and miracles; but lastly, and most eminently, to judgement. And in this his last coming, there are several remarkable periods and events; In the beginning and morning of this great day, he comes to convert the Iews, restore the Kingdom unto Ierusalem, and to the church of Christ, and to destroy antichrist, and all the Saints enemies; not utterly, finally; but of all power and dominion over the Church, which is quite taken off by Christ; and a sure chain or tye laid on their spirits of malice, and on their Ring-leader, Satan himself, that there is none can hurt during this glorious reigne in Gods holy mountain: This Restauration is the work of the morning of the day. But the wotk of the evening of this day, is, the universal resurrection of the dead, and to give final sentence on all the enemies of Christ, that opposed him, and his Kingdom, and to give them their portions with the devil and his angels, in that lake of fire that burneth for evermore: see more at large hereof in chap. 20. So that there is not two last coming of Christ, but two remarkable acts or events in this his last coming; to wit, in the morning and evening of this great day of his appearance.

Verse 8. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,* saith the Lord, *which is, and which was, and which is to come, even the Almighty.*

Here the Divinity of Christ is plainly asserted, who counts it no robbery to be equal with God, and to take his attributes unto himself: And that the person here intended by the Spirit, is Christ, is clear from the precedent verse; the same person that came with clouds, and was pierced, is the same here described, who is the Alpha and Omega. and this is most evident, by collating it to verse 11. and 17. where he that is the first and the last; who was dead, but now alive; commands *John* to write what he law, and that was Christ; verse 1. Christ is here called the Alpha and Omega (which are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet) and which is, and which was, and which is to come, even the Almighty.

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Out of which description of his person, Note.

Observ. That Christ is one and the same, infinite, almighty, and eternal God of himself, with the Father, from everlasting. By him all things were made in the beginning, and without him nothing was made, and by him all things shall end. This eternal Word, or Christ, was with God from everlasting, and this Word was God, and therefore takes unto himself the essential and absolute incommunicable properties of God unto himself; and therefore this is a most express Scripture, if there were not any more of this consort in the word of God (wherein it abounds) to lay low the reasons of the greatest pretenders to reason in the world, the reasonless Arrianized Socinians of these times, who deny the Divinity or God-head of Christ. Collate with this, to this purpose, verses 4, and 5. of this chapter.

Verse 9. *I John, even your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the Isle called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

John in this verse describes his condition, and the place wherein he was, when he received this Revelation, using the loving and common Christian compellations, of brother and companion in tribulation: the word in the original is *οὐχιούρωδες εἰ τὸ θάλαττον*, a fellow commoner, or fellow-sharer in affliction. From whence by the way observe from the compellation.

Observ. That all Christ's servants are brethren, and fellow-feelers in all conditions, whether good or evil. And this flows from that root of union, being all baptized into one Spirit, and made members of one mystical body: so that what good soever falls to any one of Christ's members, the whole body is partaker of the joy of it. When the lost sheep, or the lost goat in the parable was found, there was a general rejoicing for it; *Come (saith the good man) rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep.* If any evil befall to any member, there is mutual mourning for it; for there is, as I may so say, the same stream of blood running in all their veins, being members of the same Body: Nay, and not only a sympathy between the members, but also between their head, Christ and them; for he takes notice of all that is done unto them, as done unto himself, whether good or evil: *In as much as ye have not done it unto one of these, ye have not done it unto me; but having done it unto one of these, you have done it unto me,* Matth. 25. 45. This informs all in power, how dangerous it is to cast contempt on the Servants of Christ; and much more to lay affliction on them. But here *John* was not only under tribulation himself for the word of God, and testimony of Jesus Christ, but also his Brethren, the seven Churches of Christ, to whom he wrote, were fellow sufferers with him; for it was under that Tyrant *Domitian*, who raised the

second

second great persecution against the Christians, between the years of Christ 97. and 99. as *Eusebius* witnesseth; and doubtless it reached not only unto *John*, the chief Apostle or Minister of those Churches, but that they were sharers in his affliction also, or else he would not have called himself *οὐχιούρωδες*, companion, or fellow commoner in sufferings with them: From which observe,

Observ. 2. Whosoever tribulation or persecution do seize on any of the eminentest lights or ministers of God's churches, then be sure the interior christians or members shall not go free themselves, but be sufferers also. The churches now in this time of patience and tribulation, must not think to be greater or freer than their master's own flock was in the time of his abode on earth; for then according to that prophecy of *Isaiah*, *The Shepherd was smitten, and the flock were dispersed, and fled*: Therefore let all his members not think to have a greater priviledge of exemption, when they are in the same condition that those sheep of his own calling was, in his time on earth.

From *John's* condition here, of Affliction and Tribulation, being a great Apostle, and one of the chiefest of the twelve, observe.

Observ. 3. That when persecution arises, it takes hold first on the eminentest lights, and choicest members of Christ's church. Satan in his designs strikes high; first at Christ, next at his Apostles, after that, at the chief Pastors and Teachers of the Gospel, if so possible he might hinder the progress of it.

Observ. 4. As a corollary from this note, That it is a rash and dangerous thing, to judge of the condition of christians according to their outward afflictions. *John* was here a man of tribulation, and under banishment, yet the beloved Disciple of Christ, The world presently judges those are none of God's people, for they are afflicted, discountenanced, imprisoned, banished, &c. and I could wish that none but the world did judge so: This is the way to condemn the righteous, and let the guilty go free: Of persons of such judgement, I demand; Was *John* that was in banishment, and under tribulation, or *Domitian's* Courtiers in prosperity and outward pomp, nearest or dearest unto God? Was *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, *Mordecai*, and the three children in the Babylonish captivity, less righteous, or more ungodly than King *Zedekiah*, who at that time lived in state and sin in the land of Judah? Or was *Jeconiah* more beloved of God dwelling at Jerusalem, who was a despised broken Idol, *Jer. 22. 28*, then those dear children of God in Babylon, who waited under a long and hard captivity? Was not *Paul* with his fetters about his heels, dearer unto God than *Agrippa* with his crown on his head, sitting in the Throne, to condemn him? Shall we number the Apostles, the Martyrs in the primitive times, and since, when they were imprisoned, stoned, sawed asunder, burnt, tormented, and slain, amongst and in the catalogue of transgressors? Is not this to condemn Christ himself, who is made a man of sorrows for our sakes? In short; those that are under great tribulati-

on, may be dear and beloved children of God, when those that are in great prosperity, may be both hated, & obstinate enemies unto him.

Observ. 5. Another observation hence is, That in the lowest, and most afflicted condition of God's church and people, God makes out unto them the greatest discoveries of himself, in light, and truth, and comfort. God here discovers unto *John* under tribulation and banishment, this excellent book of Prophesies, for the comfort of his people unto the end of all. Unto the children of Israel when they were in a strange land, and under captivity, and deprived of all their ordinances peculiar to their Temple, then God sends them an *Ezekiel* and *Daniel*, even in Babylon, with visions of God, to comfort them, and support their spirits in all their afflictions; to preserve them from Idolatry, amongst Idolaters, and to discover all false Prophets that came with false hopes unto them, to deceive them. It is not banishment, nor fetters, nor prisons, can keep off the special presence and discoveries of God from his afflicted ones, when they are lowest, he is highest in grace and mercy towards them; when we are deepest in afflictions, God comes in with his greatest consolations: *Thou remembredst us in our low estate*, saith the Psalmist. Let the godly comfort themselves in this, that in their prisons, fetters, or Banishments, God will provide for them, his discoveries of mercy, grace, and consolation, to bear up their spirits under all extremities.

In these words, *In the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*. Here is some difficulty of interpretation. Indeed Kingdom in Scripture is of divers acceptation: sometimes it is taken for the coming of Christ in spirit, sometimes for the doctrine of the Gospel, but chiefly for his triumphant reigne at the day of his last appearance; and I conceive it is here to be taken in this latter sense: for the state of affliction and tribulation in the Scripture, is never called a Kingdom, and how unsuitable it is unto it, all know; though they are said to overcome, and to be more then conquerors herein: for the Kingdom is bestowed as a reward and crown to the faithful, holding out in this condition; consult *Rev. 2. 7.* and the tenth: and that which is bestowed as the result and reward of their faithfulness under tribulation, which is the kingdom, can in no good sense be interpreted to be faithfulness under tribulation, the condition it self; one thing cannot be the cause and the effect too: as a faithful holding out under persecution is the cause (*causa dispositiva*) the kingdom or reigning is as the fruits and effects, therefore not one and the same: so that the interpretation or sense of this verse runs thus; *I John*, your brother, and sharer, or companion in tribulation with you, for the hopes in that kingdom which is to be revealed by Jesus Christ at his second coming; and for which I, and you, and all Christ's faithful ones, wait for in patience, and longing desirings, through Jesus Christ our Lord. From whence this Note ariseth.

Observ. That all Christ's faithful ones ought to wait with patience under all afflictions and tribulations, for the day of their release,

lease, by the coming of the Lord Jesus, and his Kingdom. This is the Kingdom of patience and suffering, not of reigning and triumphing. Some of Christ's disciples would needs have the kingdom presently, in that their question, *Is this the time that thou wilt restore the Kingdom unto Israel?* But Christ answered, *It is not for you to know the time and seasons*; you are to occupy, employ your talents till I come. Of the souls beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, *How long Lord?* is their continual cry: Their work is with prayers and tears to wait upon God for deliverance; they set not the world on fire by wars and bloodshed, the proper works of Satan and his members; they are (to wit the Saints, or at least should be) of meek, placid and peaceable spirits, easily to be entreated; when they are reviled, not to revile; when they are stricken, not to strike again; yea, to pray even for their very enemies: and to such persons, in God's appointed time, he will fulfil that promise, *The meek shall inherit the earth*. This sets a check upon the turbulent ones of this age, the soundness of whose spirit I question, being opposite to the former characters of Christ's spirit; who conceive they go about to pull down Antichrist, when they raise commotions, rebellions, and bloodsheds in States and Commonwealths, and endeavour the ruine of the Sovereign Magistrates thereof; when as indeed, the prosecution of the work against Antichrist, is rather hindered then furthered hereby; for hereby they weaken and divert the hands of Sovereigns from that work, in as much as in them lieth: for antichrist is to fall by the hands of those Princes and Powers of the world from whom it had its first rise, *Rev. 17. 16.* and therefore all should rather add to their helping hands in assisting those Christian Magistrates they live under, rather then disturb or oppose them in this work: and for those that are otherwise minded, let them be here companions with *John*, Wait for his coming in faith and patience, and stand still, and they shall see the salvation of our God.

Observ. 2. Another note hence riseth, That the contemplation of the coming of the Kingdom of Christ, is the great prop and stay of the spirits of all Christ's faithful ones, under all their afflictions and tribulations.

John here comforts himself, and the Churches, with those thoughts; in the next place he often inculcates this contemplation on them that should be tryed, and come under tribulation; Christ would give them as the guerdon of all their sufferings, this Kingdom, described under several names, of the crown of life, *v. 10.* Manna which is hid, and white stone, *v. 17.* the Tree of Life, *v. 7.* Power over Nations, *v. 26.* and to rule with a rod of iron, *v. 27.* and lastly, Christ himself, by the name of Morning Star, *v. 28.* And indeed, what can more support the spirits of afflicted Saints, then to know there is a crown laid up for them, and dominion, that shall last for ever, after the progress of a short afflicted life here: and therefore the Apostle *Paul* accounted the afflictions

of this present life, not worthy of the glory which should be revealed unto us, *Rom. 8. 18.*

Was in the Isle called Patmos.] Whether *John* fled there voluntarily, to avoid persecution, or banished there, as most ancient Writers affirm, I shall not contend: but sure he was in this Island called Patmos, by reason of the great persecutions in *Domitian's* days, about *Anno Christi 97.* This Island was one of the Cyclades in the Ægean Sea, now called Archipelago, situated between the lesser Asia and Greece, now under the command of the Grand Seignior, and in the way going up from the Mediterranean unto the Hellespont and Constantinople. This Island was famous for nothing so much as for this entertainment of our Apostle *John* in his exile, being one of those barbarous Islands into which the Romans did use to send their malefactors and exiles: and here in this Island, amongst the Barbarians, *John* received these Visions and Revelations, wherein observe.

Obseru. That God does not tie himself in the discoveries of himself, unto the holiness of places. The Rabbins have a rule amongst them, and they hold it for truth, That God never spake unto the Prophets out of the holy Land; but this is contradicted in the Prophets *Ezekiel* and *Daniel*, who received their visions at Babylon, by the River Chebar in Chaldea, *Ezek. 1. 1, 2.* God did here pass by the holy Land, the holy Temple, the holy City, and gave those Visions of God in Chaldea, and pours out his spirit in Babylon. Whiles *John* conversed about Jerusalem, and those holy places *John* had not any Visions; but when in Patmos, amongst Barbarians, he had these high and glorious Revelations. God is not tyed to places, in a dungeon, in prison, as unto *Paul* and others; In a Babylon, as unto *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, and the three children: God pours down his Spirit into the hearts of his servants, and raiseth them up unto a height of Prophecie.

Obseru. 2. That God often in the most obscurest and barbarous corners of the earth, doth raise up glorious Instruments for his service: It was once a question, *Can any good come out of Nazareth?* Much more may it be said, *Can any good come out of Egypt, of Rome, of Babylon, of Patmos?* The answer was, *Come and see:* so I say, come and see a glorious prophet in Patmos, a *Moses* in Egypt, a church of saints in the house of *Nero*, in Babylon an *Ezekiel*, a *Daniel* in Caldea. God can raise up instruments most serviceable unto his name and glory, in the most profane and idolatrous places: and this is from that unlimitted spirit of God, that bloweth where it listeth: see more hereon in chap. 2. v. 13.

For the Word of God, and the Testimony of Jesus Christ,] This shows the cause of *John's* exile, because he professed faithfully the Word, and the Testimony of Jesus Christ.

Hence observe, That the Saints faithful profession of God and Christ, moves the rage of Christ's, and their enemies against them. *John* here became a fugitive and exile in *Patmos* for this faithful testimony,

slimony, and this is no more then what Christ foretold of before his passion; that his Disciples should be offended because of him, and that they should be cast out, imprisoned, reviled, and suffer many persecutions for his names sake: And the ground or reason of all this, is, from that promise in *Gen. 3.* *That God would set enmity between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent;* and this enmity hath abided ever since, and will ever abide between those two mystical seeds, until the seed of the woman, Christ and his members, shall become absolute conquerors in the binding up the old serpent, who is the father of all enmities and mischiefs. This informeth God's people, that it should not seem strange unto them, when the world and their enemies do rage against them.

Here a question may come in, Whether christians (when they are called unto it) are bound in duty to suffer for the profession of all the Truths of God?

To clear this question, I shall premise briefly, That Truths are either about fundamentals, or circumstantial. Fundamentals are such, as without the knowledge thereof, we cannot ordinarily be saved; and they are conversant either about the very being of a Saint and Christian: or secondly, about the well-being, in preserving and building up this Christian in his holy faith; and these are called principles, or rudiments of Religion, *Heb. 6. 1.* You know no one can proceed to be an Artist in any Art or Science, or come to any perfection therein, without some certain rules and principles to proceed by: so none can become a true Christian or Artist in that heavenly Science of Christianity, without some first laid principles: And amongst those Fundamentals which are necessary to the Being of a Christian, I believe, as some have been too large in the description of their Fundamentals, so some have been too narrow; and therefore seeing they are not precisely determined by any universal assembly of christians, but are left to be gathered up here and there in the Word of God by parcels, I shall not be so presumptuous, to define their certain number; only I say thus much, That that Creed which is called the Apostolical, setting a qualified sense on that article of Christ's descent into hell, to be the exactest square and rule of principles that relates unto the very Being of a Christian, that is this day extant; and he that is not ready to suffer for the profession thereof, is not worthy the name of a Christian.

Now secondly, other Fundamentals are about the well-being of a christian; and such are all the Ordinances of the Gospel: As, Baptism, Lord's Supper, Prayer, Thank-givings, all Church Orders and Fellowships, Preaching, Exhorting, Reproving, Overseeing, and the like: And if it be in our power, we are rather to forbear the use of one of them, then to defile our souls or consciences under corrupt administrations of them; but if at any time we were called to suffer for the essential truth of them, we are bound to suffer, and to bear them a testimony, as a part of the Truth and Word

Word of God. But for every opinion that arises about the right administrations of the latter, or manner of understanding of the former principles, which are but the circumstantial of Religion, to set bonds upon the conscience therein, it favours rather of a spirit of contention, heat, and passion, then of sound judgement, and christian wisdom. This is to make hard knots where there is none, and Christ calls his yoke easie, this were to make it burdenous and intollerable: The substantial part of Christian Religion is plain and easie, and the blinde may walk therein, and a lamb may wade thoro: *This is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*, John 17. 3. It is true, there are mysteries, high questions, and deep things of God in the word, these are for the exercise of our spirits and gifts, not of our faith, no further then as part of the revealed mind of God; and therefore we believe them to be truth, though we understand them not, which are reserved until the day of the revelation of all things, when we shall know as we are known, and when all our ignorances and imperfections shall be done away. This sets a check upon some hot spirits of these times, that rather then lose or part with their wilde opinions, or let them lie unvented, would break all the bonds of peace, charity, and communion amongst Christians, and so utterly deprive the churches of Christ of all the benefit which otherwise their gifis and parts might stand in stead for. I doubt all sorts of Christians of our times are too far baptiz'd into this errour, and Satan hath too great a stroke in it to divide the hearts of Christians about circumstantial, when as they hold one and the same fundamentals joynly together: The Lord in mercy to his churches remedy this great evil and sin of our times.

Vers. 10. *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a Trumpet.*

In the Greek copie it is no more but *Ἐγγείωντο ἐν πνεύματι, Ι was in the Spirit;* which in Beza's translation is rendred *corrupt. in Spiritu, I was rapt in Spirit.* It was indeed a rapture of spirit, an extasie wherein John received this Vision; and so it hath been with all the Prophets of old, they were act'd by the Spirit in all their visions and prophesies, they were lift up above themselves, and out of themselves, when they were to have cognizance of Divine things, and this was by the Eternal Spirit of God, working mightily in their spirits.

Obseru. That the Spirit of God does as it were set a violence on those persons he employs about the high mysteries and discoveries of his choicest Truths. *Paul*, that great light of the Gentiles, he had his raptures into the third heaven; whether in the body, or out of the body, he could not tell. *Ezekiel* when he was to receive those high Visions, he oft reports of the Spirit entring into him, and taking him up, *cap. 3. 12. and 2. 2.* *John* for his better accomplishment

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to receive those divine Visions, he is here said to be *rapt in Spirit*: And the reasons of this is, First, That he might be the better enabled to take a clear and full view of those divine discoveries which were about to be shown unto him: When we would show one things distinctly, we use to place him up on high for the better sight. Secondly, That he might have satisfaction in his own spirit that those his visions were from God, seeing he had so extraordinary taste of the Spirit in the first place, he might well conclude he was now, as it were, to become the mouth of the Spirit unto the churches. Lastly, That his thoughts and heart might have been sequestred from things below, and his contemplation raised higher on things divine, as a true Prophet of God ought to have.

Another Note from hence is, as a corollary to the former, That when Christ sets up any eminent Officer, or Light in his church, for the service thereof, God first fills them with his Spirit. When John was but upon entring upon his prophetical office, God ravishes him with his Spirit, and fills him therewith, to fit him for this office: When men in the Apostles days were to be chosen but for the lowest services in the Church, as for the over-sight of the poor, and the like, yet they must be men full of the holy Ghost, and wisdom, *Act. 6. 3.* Much more then for the highest places, as Prophets, Pastors, Teachers, and Elders, &c. It is said, *Paul and Barnabas were filled with the holy Ghost, and therefore to be separated unto the work*, *Act. 13. 24. and 13. 2.* The Offices of the churches of Christ, are for those that have the Spirit of Christ in them, in some fulnes of it: those places are not for such as are filled with the spirit of envie, covetousness, pride, the world, contention, ignorance, and anti-christian lording; such have not the spirit of Christ in them; it may be well said of such, that they run for profit here, and the like, but the Lord sent them not, *Act. 14. 14. and 23. 21.* They flatter themselves, and think they are called and sent of God, because God hath given them some common acquired gifts and parts, yet want all the especial graces of the Spirit: as meeknes, self-denial, contempt of this world, humility, bowels of compassion, ready to forgive, sound knowledge in the truth, and holines and righteousness in their lives and conversations: they that want those graces in the truth of them, are neither fit for those high functions in the church, nor can satisfiengly perswade themselves, or others, that they are called unto it: Let this be as a memento to all such that climbe over the walls into those holy Functions, and are well satisfied with a call from men, when they were never called of God; I say, let all such fear and tremble, lest God spew them all out, together with their flocks that would have it so, in his wrath, for ever.

John was rapt in Spirit on the Lord's day: *κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ*, in the Greek: Whether this day be here called the Lord's day, for the great discoveries of those visions made unto John upon this day, or because it was the Lord's day for the assembling of the Saints, to perform their services unto God; it being the same day with that,

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which the Apostles call the first day of the week, and our christian Sabbath, I shall not much contend, but rather am inclined unto the latter, for these two reasons. First, Because the great work of Christ's resurrection, on that day wherein he was manifested Lord, and Conquerour over hell, and Satan, purchased it that Title of the Lords day. Secondly, Because the observation of the Sabbath, with all christian publique services, were transferred to that day, and so is called the Lord's day, *κυριακή ἡμέρα*, or according to the Scottish dialect, the Kirks day, the Churches day, because they held their assemblies, and performed their publique services upon that day. Hence note.

Observe. That the Lord's day, or the day of the great and publique assemblings of the Saints, is the fittest time for God's highest discoveries of Grace and Truth.

John received here on this day, his high irradiations of spirit and Prophesies: This is God's great Market day, wherein there is a constant and mutual Exchange, or Bartering of heavenly and divine commodities: the Saints come with the returns of their improvements of mercies, in praises, prayers, and thanksgivings; God gives out in return, farther supplies of grace, and greater measure of knowledge in his ways and truths: Therefore sure, most happy, most knowing, and most gracious are those Saints that are most found in this way. O! this should make all of us that are not in this way, to wail for it, as *David* in his absence and exile from the church of God, that being the special habitation of God's glory, *Psal. 96. 6.* and to breath after it, even as the Hart Brayeth after the fountain streams: for this is the day of the Saints assemblings, wherein the Angel comes down, the Angel of the New Covenant, Christ in spirit, to stir upon the waters of Bethesda, upon the hearts and affections of all his people.

When *John* was in this rapture of spirit on the Lord's day, then he heard behind him a mighty voice, as it were of a Trumpet, loud and terrible: The Trumpet being a warlike Instrument, whose sound is to prepare unto Battel, and to the terror of the adversary. God's publique admonitions are so unto his church; it not only prepares his own unto repentance, but is also of terrible signification unto all his impenitent enemies.

But here comes in a question fit to be discussed; *John* had here his raptures of spirit, extasies, and heard a great voice as of a Trumpet: The Quere will be, How shall we know Divine raptures, extasies, or visions, from diabolical? For Satan is God's Ape, and hath his raptures, possessions, strange apparitions, sounds and voices also.

For answer, first know, that God's visions are given either in the sleep, as unto *Jacob*, when he saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and Angels ascending and descending, in *Gen. 28.* but such are more properly called Divine Dreams. Or secondly, When the person is awake, as here, when *John* was at Patmos on the Lord's day,

day, doubtless either in God's services, or holy contemplations, he received those visions and raptures of spirit, and those extasies, or raptures of spirit, do cause a great alteration upon the person that receives them; he is as it were, taken out of himself that is in this posture and frame; and therefore it is called a rapture or extasie, *quasi extra se raptus*, being in that posture not master of the faculties of his own soul, which are wholly in the power and motions of the Spirit that acts them; and this is common to both sorts of raptures, whether from the good or evil spirit: Now to discern what spirit moves in such raptures or visions, observe first, Whether the person passive, or that is under such raptures of spirit, were always, or for the most part of their lives, faithful witnesses unto the word of God, and of Jesus Christ; such have not only the promise of the holy Spirit to teach them all things, *1 John 2. 27.* but to be preserved against the evil one, in their bodies, souls, and spirits.

Secondly, Observe the matter of their visions in such raptures, whether it be to denounce God's judgments against sinful practices, or not; for surely Satan will never be divided against himself, if we will believe our Saviour, for so his kingdom could not stand; though I have read a story in some old Popish Mass-monger, that the devil once in the shape of a Priest, preached a very catholique sermon, but being discovered by some Saint in presence (it seems one of an excellent endowment in discerning spirits) asked him, how durst Satan to appear in that presence, with so sound, holy, and catholique instructions in his mouth? The devil, or the devilish preacher answered him, that whilst he preached good and sound doctrine unto his auditors, and they were not followers of it, he had his end, even the aggravation of their condemnation for their neglect, inproficiency, and contempt of such good doctrine: surely how this odd designe should come into the devil's head, I know not, being a liar from the beginning, and the truth abideth not in him, nor will confess it no further then he is compelled to do it by an over-mastering divine power, this were indeed to destroy his own Kingdom: and God never sends the evil spirits to be the messengers to provoke to break off from sins, to live to God, holiness, and works of reformation, his very nature is contrary to such works, and therefore is the great hinderer, not the promoter of them. This is another mark to discern of what spirits visions are of.

Thirdly, Another distinguishing mark is, That in respect those visions and raptures of spirit carries with them a terribleness in the strange apparitions therein, they leave a high and strange impression of spirit upon the parties under them; and those that are from God, leaves always behind them, when they are passed away, a holy awe and reverence of the divine Majesty and glory, and a contempt of themselves and their own worthlessness. *Isaiah* the Prophet when he saw the Lord, and had discoveries of his glory, he could call out *Wo is me! for I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips, for my eyes*

eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts, Isa. 6. 5. *Iob* also confesseth, cap. 42. 5, 6. *Now mine eyes seeth thee, I abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes.* The sight of divine glory and majesty doth always humble, in that it brings to sight our own worthlessness, even in our best attainments in respect of it, which causeth a godly sorrow. Now the contrary spirit brings contrary fruits and effects, as pride, vain-glory, &c. and therefore not difficult to be differenced in their operations.

Fourthly, Visions, extasies, or raptures of the Divine Spirit, though often they may much grieve and trouble their spirits that are under them, as in *Dan.* 7. 15. and 8. 27. and take away their sensess for the present, and their strength and comeliness, and make them as it were, faint, dead, dumb, and breathless, as in *Daniel*, cap. 10. 8. 15. 17. verses, and as *John* in verse 17, at the vision of Christ, he fell at his feet as dead, and in the examples of *Zachariah*, *Paul*, &c. yet after they are passed, they have no impairing in the parts either of their bodies or souls, but rather a greater glory put upon them, as *Moses*, whose face did shine, coming from the presence and visions of God. *Paul* grew a most eminent light, and the highest of all the Apostles, after he was stricken as dead with his converting vision, *Acts* 9. *John* here receives great and high revelations from Christ, after he was stricken as dead at his feet, by the glory of the vision. God is no hard master, none were ever losers to be his instruments in this sort; for unto such he commonly adds greater additions of parts, grace, and glory.

But on the other side, by the evil spirit's raptures or possessions, many have not only lost the due temperature of their reason and understanding, and so become altogether besotted, and wittols, but have also their bodies impaired by the hard service of their master. Hence it is, that as it is reported, and commonly by experience seen, of witches, and such wretched creatures that are truly bewitched by the spirit of delusion, and have given up themselves as servants to his will, have the faculties of their souls so impaired and hurt by his possessions, and daylie disturbing of them, he being an Apollyon, or destroyer from the beginning, that being broken in their reasons, they conceive in their raptures, that they are transformed into strange shapes, of cats, dogs, hares, &c. and in an instant to be transported and carried into far places distant, and in and out to houses, though the doors were shut; things in themselves above the efficiency of any creature, and contradictory to nature, and all its works: and unless persons of such belief makes two Omnipotents, it can never stand. Indeed the true ground hereof, and of all their confessions in this kind, proceeds from hence, that the devil from whom they have their frequent extasies and raptures, hath so befooled them in their understandings, that they do verily believe those things to be really done and acted, which the devil does represent unto them in their extasies and trances, and so when they are out of them, having lost their reasons, believes, and often confesses

confesses them to be of truth, though many of them be impossibilities in nature, without a miracle, and had never a being, further then in the fancies of their confused and disturbed brains: This is the reward of the devil's instruments in this kind.

Fifthly and lastly, If all these former distinguishing marks fail, for a hypocrite may go very far in complying with the signs of God's word, yet herein he cannot deceive; to wit, in the truth of his vision or revelation, in the event thereof; this will be sure to try him, whether his vision be from God or not. Events discovers visions, and distinguishes prophets, *Jer.* 28. 9. *The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known that the Lord hath truly sent him;* and this is according to that of *Deut.* 18. 21, 22. The question is, How we shall know whether a vision be from God or not? Look to the event, if it comes to pass, it is of God; if not, it is a lie.

Jeremiah prophesied against Jerusalem, *Hananiah*, and other false prophets, the contrary; *Jer.* 28. 2, 3, 4. *Ahab* feared not to go against *Ramoth Gilead*, whiles *Zedekiah* the false prophet told him, *Go and prosper*, *1 Kings* 22, but when the words of *Micaiah* proved true to *Ahab* in his destruction, then the false prophets were confounded, and *Zedekiah* ran into an inner chamber to hide himself, *2 Kings* 22. 25.

Object. But hath not the devil often foretold the truth of events? Yes, but not with that clearness, as the divine Spirit does; he leaves no hesitation or doubting on which side the overthrow will be: The Beast, together with the false Prophet, and their adherents, must be taken and destroyed; the Saints must remain the conquerors: Satan in his predictions, is but as a good guesser, or conjecturer at best, to keep his credit good with his complices; he gives out his predictions in riddles, or ænigma's, as of old, in the Oracles at Delphos.

Aio te Æacides Romanos vincere posse.

Or that of *Cræsus*:

Cræsus Halyn penetrans magnam pervertes opum vim.

Both which may be taken in a diverse sense, which the constructors took in advantage, as to themselves, and so proved to both fatal, in not applying them the right way. Again, if Satan foretells any thing, it is only gathered from the observation of the affairs of the world, and his long experienced conversing in them, and this at best can be but conjectural, and therefore keeps himself to those dark ways of delivery. Lastly, To ascribe to Satan truth in foretelling of events, it would rob God of his glory, and one of his great prerogatives, which he alone by his Spirit hath often manifested to his servants the Prophets, for the good and comfort of his church and people.

Object.

object. But did not Satan tell *Saul*, in that apparition of *Samuel*, in 1 Sam. 28. 19. That he should be delivered, with all his host, into the hands of the Philistines, and that he and his sons on the morrow should be all with *Samuel*, that is dead? And was not that prediction truly fulfilled?

I answer, first, Amongst Expositors there is a great difference of opinions about the meaning of this place: They that hold it was *Samuel* himself, who was at rest, have but small store of reason for it, for these reasons.

First, Because God will not send one from the dead to exhort the living: *They have Moses, and the Prophets.*

Secondly, It is improbable that God would send *Samuel*, who would not let him to answer *Saul* in his life time, because God had forsaken him, would now send him from the dead to advise him, and then too, when he was advising with Wizards and Witches, which was utterly forbidden by God in his Law. But the current of most Expositors hold, That it was the devil in the appearance or likeness of *Samuel*. But herein submitting to the judicious and more discerning judgements, I here lay down some considerations to the contrary: If this were Satan in the shape of *Samuel*, it is strange he would leave such an excellent lesson to all posterity, to the destruction and prejudice of his own kingdom, as this is: *Saul* had departed from God, and disobeyed his voice, therefore God was departed from him, and given his kingdom unto another, even unto *David*, ver. 16, 17, 18, 19. and at last, for this his disobedience, would destroy him and his family by the hands of their enemies: Now this is against that former saying of our Saviour's, *A Kingdom divided, cannot stand*; is Satan divided against himself: Collate unto this the reasons a little before mentioned, and judge whether ever that spirit of lies, and enmity to mankind, would leave such a good and fruitful lesson for the children of men upon record, to his prejudice for ever. For this reason I am hardly induced to believe, that this was Satan in *Samuel's* apparition, but rather a cozening confederate of the Pythonist of Endor, set up by her in a secret corner, described by her, or set up in the shape and garments of the old and famous Prophet *Samuel*, who was but lately dead, and therefore his postures, garments, and also his prophesies of rending the Kingdom from *Saul*, and giving it unto *David*, was very well known unto all Israel; and therefore this witch of Endor could not be ignorant of it, being but a little way distant from the Court of *Saul*, where *Samuel* was often conversant in his life time, as appears from vers. 7, and 8. compared with 25: And also it appears unto me, that *Saul* here in the whole transaction, did not see the counterfeit *Samuel*, by that his question in vers. 14. *What form is he of? And she said, an old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle:* And *Saul* perceiving by this description of hers that it was *Samuel*, he bows himself, and so proceeds to his busines with this *Samuel* or counterfeit, which might lie hid behind some shrine, hanging,

ing, or grate, where the whole cozenage is transacted; and how easily *Saul* was to be caught and deceived in this kind, appears from his distraction, consternation, and fear he was in, being surrounded of his enemies, forsaken of God, and seeking unto witches in this time of trouble: This wise woman, or witch of Endor, with her confederate, knew well enough that this was *Saul*, being higher by the head then all Israel, though disguised, and by his attendants and servants with him, from the beginning of this whole art of cozenage, though she counterfeited the contrary, verse 12. This appears from her neighbourhood with the Court, he coming to her, and after all these cozening transactions, returning the same night again, verse 25. whereas this counterfeit is here often called *Samuel*, and *Saul* took him indeed to be *Samuel*; yet this makes it no more to be true and real *Samuel*, then if it had been granted that it was the devil in *Samuel's* shape: so that under correction of better judgements, I am of opinion, this was not Satan in *Samuel's* likeness, that left this useful lesson and prediction, for the reasons aforesaid, but rather proceeded from the cozening Pythonist of Endor, and her well-informed confederate, who well knew of the prediction of the Prophet *Samuel*, that God would take off the kingdom from *Saul*, and give it unto his servant *David*, because *Saul* had disobeyed God's voice in the busines of *Agag*; and this she could foresee was the time, in that the Philistines, the enemies of Israel, were come up against him, and he knew not which way to turn, for God had forsaken him, and had denied to answer him either by Prophet, Urim, or Thummim. I have been somewhat the longer herein, to stave the devil off, that he may not have any hand in God's prerogative in foretelling the truth of events. If it were granted that this were the Devil in *Samuel's* likeness, yet I answer, the Devil might well gather the truth of this prediction concerning the destruction of *Saul*, and his sons, from that of *Samuel's* prophesie against him, when in his life time at *Gilgal*, he came and told him, that God would rend his kingdom from him, for not obeying his word, and give it unto his servant *David*, 1 Sam. 13. 14. And therefore the Devil here might well predict the same unto *Saul*, coming to him to know the event and success of his undertaking against the Philistines: But in the time, and some other circumstances of this prediction, whether it proceeded from Satan, or the cozening Pythonist, yet there is a palpable failure therein, to show, that God's Spirit alone is the spirit of prophesie, and the sure foretelling of all events in the full truths thereof: for this pretended *Samuel*, tells *Saul*, that to morrow he and his sons should be with him, that is, in the state of death. But observe, if this were the Devil, how this father of lies keeps on his old trade of lying; for indeed, *Saul* and his sons were not overthrown nor slain by the Philistines on the morrow, but some days after; as appeareth by considering the several transactions done by *David*, in the 29, and 30 chapters, against the Amalekites, after he was dismissed from the Army of the Philis-

Philistines, before they fell upon *Saul* and his Army to their utter overthrow, *chap. 31. v. 3. &c.* It is also somewhat against reason that *Saul* should be all the precedent night at *Endor*, and on his way coming and going, and that under great dejection, trouble, and consternation, by reason of his hard fate foretold him; and yet notwithstanding, he should the immediate morrow joyn Battel with the Philistines, is in my apprehension a very unlikely conceit. I shall only add, and conclude with that of the Psalmist: *O teach us O Lord, to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom; that both God and the creature may have their dues.*

Ver. 11. *I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; and what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven Churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, unto Pergamus, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

After *John* was set by a spiritual rapture in a fit frame and posture to receive those divine and excellent Revelations, he in this verse makes an entrance into his first vision, which was the effect of that great and mighty voice that he heard, as of a Trumpet, saying, *I am Alpha, and Omega, &c.* This was Christ, as is manifested in verse 8, compared to the 9. who is the beginning and last of all things, and who is the giver out, and author of this Revelation unto *John*, and gives him this vision concerning the seven Churches, by way of an admonitory Epistle unto them; and what he sees, and shall be represented unto him in those visions: he is commanded to write them down, and send them to the seven famous Churches, which then were in *Asia minor*, at *Ephesus, Smyrna, &c.* Hence Note.

Observe. That the true Ministers of the Gospel must deal very faithfully with their churches in their doctrines and prophesies; they must come with real visions of God, not feigned ones. *Paul* did profess unto those he wrote, that he kept nothing back for their good, but discovered the whole mind of God unto them: They are to observe God's motions and directions; when he moves, they must move; when he stands still, so must they. If God commands them to come with the doctrines of peace and consolation, they are not to come with the doctrines of judgements, and if God proceeds in anger, wrath, and judgments against a people for their sins; the Ministers ought not, like the false Prophets in *Jeremiah*, preach peace, peace, and few pillows under their elbows, to build them up in security, and so make them ripe for destruction; neither are they only in a perfunctory way to preach the mind of God unto their churches, but they must follow *John's* example here, whatsoever vision or burden is made known unto them from the Lord, they must for the more certainty, and better observation thereof, write it down, and send it, and commit it to their churches keeping: this

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this rule the Apostles kept, in committing their doctrines unto writing, a sure way of preserving it for the churches of Christ, to the end of all.

Ver. 12. *And I turned to see the voice that spake with me, and being turned, I saw seven golden Candlesticks.*

Verse 13. *And in the midst of the seven Candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

John having heard this great and terrible voice, he turned to see the voice that spake unto him: Either this is to be taken metonymically, where seeing is put for understanding; that is, he turned rightly and distinctly to understand the voice he heard: or else to be taken per Synecdochen, part for the whole; that is, he turned to see the voice, that is, the person that uttered the voice. From hence note,

Observe. That God's faithful ones are very intent to know the mind of God in all the discoveries of his Will. They are not those that desire to know their master's will darkly, and in part, they are willing to know it fully, that they may fully obey it: It is but a fruitless hearing, to hear the voice only in the ministry of the Word of God, and not be intent upon the intendment and substance of it. The word of God (though it be the power of life unto all that believe) yet without this, is but as a mere voice, and a dead letter. Those with *Paul, Acts 9.* when he was stricken down when he was going to *Damasco*, heard the voice, but saw not him that spake unto him; so many in our days, do hear the same voice of God, that strikes thorow other souls unto conversion, whiles they neither see nor understand the meaning of God in the voice, either to their comfort or conversion.

No sooner was *John* turned, to comprehend more distinctly this voice that spoke unto him, but presently he had a vision presented him, of the seven golden Candlesticks, and one like unto the Son of man in the midst of them; what is meant by the seven golden Candlesticks, I refer to the last verse of this chapter, where the Spirit it self is Interpreter: But by the way this Note ariseth.

Observe. That God reserveth his choicest discoveries for the most diligent and enquiring souls. *John* when he turned to see the voice, and being turned, he saw seven golden Candlesticks, &c. When souls turn to God, and enquire carefully after his will, God will be found of them, they are the Treasurers of his mind; *The secrets of the Lord are with those that fear him:* They shall know the intendment of God in all the revolutions and providential percussions of the Nations of the world. If the Statists of the world would know what would be the event of things, their best counsellors would be such as are the wise and diligent observers (not of Stars, flying of Birds, the bowels of Beasts, and such Ethnick fopperies) but of the voice of God in his holy Word.

Obseru. 2. The things contained in this book of Prophecies are most certain. *John* saith not he heard only a voice, but he saw seven golden Candlesticks, &c. The sense of sight is the most certain, most evidential of all the senses, *1 John* 1. 3. And indeed this whole book is a book of visions, presented unto *John*, and which he saw in Patmos: Now in all visions there are some representations made either to the eye of the body externally, or to the eye of the mind internally.

Secondly, In every vision there is something that is Future, and therefore it is sometimes called prophetic, or prediction, *1 Isa.* 1. 1.

Thirdly, The party to whom it is made, hath a strong irradiation of Spirit, and mighty light over-powering him, to make him obedient unto that heavenly vision, and so is put out of all doubt of the truth of it.

Fourthly, It is in great evidence when the party is awake. Dreams are but obscurer visions when men are asleep; and therefore visions are the more evident and excellent discoveries of the truth.

In this first vision, *John* saw seven golden Candlesticks, and in the mids of them, one like the Son of man, &c. Some may conceive that this person here represented in the likeness of the Son of man, to be some Angel, and not Christ; because he is said to be like the Son of man, and not the Son of man, but an Angel which Christ depurized, as v. 1. to give these visions unto *John*. But to getel this opinion, I offer these reasons. First, He is called the **A** and **n** in verse 8. and in chap. 2. vers. 18. where the same person is described, he is called the Son of God; Now sure God would never give these Titles, and his peculiar Attributes, unto creature-Angels, but unto his Son, who is not only *equivalent*, but *equivalent*, not only *consimilari*, but *consubstantial* with the Father; and who counts it no robbery to be equal with God: For, unto which of the Angels hath he said, ye are the **A** and **n**, the first, and the last? Or, ye are the Sons of God? Or, unto which of the Angels hath he said, as in verse 18. ye are alive, but ye were dead; or, ye have the keys of hell, and of death? Surely no creature in heaven or in earth will take these high Titles and Prerogatives unto themselves, but Christ himself; and therefore this likeness of the Son of man in this vision, must needs be Christ: And by the way, I would have the observant reader take notice, that it is not very difficult to discern what visions in this book are given forth by Christ, and what by Angels, by observing the descriptions of the parties that gives them; for the principal and most remarkable visions, Christ gives out himself, but the less principal, he discovers by his ministers, the Angels. But to leave nothing in the dark: Some may say, Why may not this be the Father who appeared unto *Daniel*? chap. 7. 9. who is there called the Ancient of days, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head as pure wool, his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels were as burning fire? The description of this person here in *Daniel*, is almost the same with this in the Revelation, comparing

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paring the 11. 14, and 15 verses together. I answer, first, The Learned do observe, That neither the Father, nor the holy Spirit, have ever appeared in the likeness or the shape of man.

Secondly, The Anthropomorphites have abused this place, to maintain their gross opinion, of the corporeity and circumscription of the infinite Deity; and therefore the all-wise Spirit of God, to prevent the mistakes of man about the invisible and incomprehensible nature of God, describes this vision of *Daniel* in the likeness and appearance of things; not that they were materially so: It is the likeness of a Throne, and like a fiery flame, &c. And in the 13 verse, like the Son of man; no true substantial body, nor material visions.

Thirdly, I answer, This must be the person of the Son in the likeness of man, for the reasons immediately foregoing, who was dead, but is alive; and he that should attribute this to the Father, or the Spirit, should want some Hellebore.

Lastly, This must be Christ, because we find in Scripture, that Christ hath often appeared in visions like unto man, *Dan.* 7. 13. *I saw in the night Visions*, and behold one like the Son of man; *Ezék.* 1. 26. and *Rev.* 14. 14. *I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud, one sat like unto the Son of man*: and that this was the person of the Son, and not the Father, or the holy Spirit, is most evident from verse 18. of chap. 2. where one and the same person that is in the 13, 14, and 15, verses, here described in the mids of the seven Churches, or the seven golden Candlesticks, who had his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine braes; in the 18. verse of chap. 2. he commands *John* to write to *Thyatira*, one of the seven Churches. *These things saith the Son of God, which hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine braes.* Therefore to be brief, that person that is here called the Son of God, is neither the Father, nor the Spirit, but Christ, the eternal Son of God.

Quere. But was not this appearance then in the likeness of the Son of man, truly man, or Christ the Son of man? Seeing you hold it was the person of Christ, was it Christ according to his manhood?

I answer, It was Christ, but not Christ as the Son of man; for it is a maxime, that *nullum simile est idem*; and here he is called, like the Son of man, therefore not the true and proper Son of man. The heavens was to contain his manhood until the restauration of all things; though his Divinity is ubiquitary, omnipresent, and omnipotent, yet his manhood is circumscribed, and terminated unto one place at once; if it be in heaven, it cannot be on earth; it ascended there, *Act. 1. 10. 11.* and *Stephen* saw him there, even the Son of man, at the right hand of his Father, in glory, *Act. 7. 56.* not by a visionary representation, but truly and really: As God gave *Stephen* this glorified sight of the Son of man in heaven, so God doubtless fitted and qualified his organical instruments of sight

above their common pitch, to reach an object at so high a distance ; when God will work wonderfully, he can turn Nature out of its proper frame, either in elevating it beyond its own power of production, or to hinder it in its own peculiar operations : He can make the Sun to stand still, as in the days of *Joshua* : He can make the eye to see a thousand miles distance, as unto *Stephen* ; he can bind up the fiery flames, that they shall not hurt or burn, as unto the three children in the fiery Furnace, walking therein without scorching a hair. But to return, If Christ, as the Son of man, be in heaven, then he is not on the earth, he is not transubstantiated, or consubstantiated into, or with the Bread in the Sacrament, as the Papists and some Lutherans dream of.

But secondly I answer, Christ here appears to *John*, as he did to the Prophets of old before his Incarnation ; that is to say, by his Deity and Godhead, being transfigured into the likeness of man, and taking up the form of man, as being most suitable to the capacity and nature of man, and so manifests himself in the shape or form of man, otherwise the Divine Nature in it self is invisible, as in *Dan.* 7. 13. and 10. 5. *Ezek.* 1. 26. *Rev.* 14. 14. Before Christ's Incarnation, he appears in the likeness of man ; to show, that in time he would become the true and real Son of man, by assuming flesh into union with his Godhead : and since his Ascension, he appears in the likeness of man ; to teach us, that one day he will in the true humane nature, come again to judge the sons of men : He was from his first undertaking for fallen man, even from the beginning, the great Administrator and Agent for his Father, and so will be, until the end of all, under several appearances, to wit, either in Spirit and Power, as now in the days of the Gospel ; or secondly, in visionary representations, as here in the likeness of man, and to the Prophets of old : Or thirdly and lastly, in his real humane nature, as the Son of man, as in his first and second coming.

Object. But some may here unadvisedly say, If this be the Deity of Christ that appeared here to *John* in the likeness of man, and his manhood in heaven, why then there may be a separation between the Deity and the Manhood of Christ.

But this objection favours of much ignorance of the nature of the Deity : Though the Deity, I grant, is most eminently conjunct with the manhood in heaven, for that is the most special and magnificent habitation of his glory, yet this doth not at all hinder, but that that infinite Deity, which is one with the humanity in heaven, doth from thence flow, and extend it self most infinitely over the whole Universe ; and therefore is not only most glorious in heaven, but all other subludary places also are filled with his glorious presence, according to that of the Psalmist, 119. 8. *If I ascend up unto heaven, thou art there, that is the habitation of thy glory : If I go down into the deeps, thou art there also, thy power, and wonderful providential workings, are seen there also.* This is made good by that old verse,

Enter,

Enter, presenter, Deus hic, & ubiq. potenter.

God's Being, Power, and Presence, is most clear
On high, and here beneath, and every where.

Therefore it is not strange that Christ should here appear unto *John* in his Deity, as the Son of God, and not as the Son of man, but in the form or likeness of the Son of man : For if Christ had appeared to *John* in his humanity, as he did unto *Stephen*, he had then called him the Son of man ; but taking only the likeness of the Son of man, he is called cap. 2. 18. the Son of God, and not the Son of man, being under a figure like to his humanity : his humane body being in heaven since his Ascension, and is there to abide, until the latter day, *Acts* 2. 34, 35.

From this figure of Christ's appearance in the likeness of man, observe : That the Divine nature of Christ, is too glorious for the eyes of man to behold, therefore is here represented to *John* under the form of man : the more excellent glory is here shadowed under that is less glorious. If Christ had opened his divine nature and glory unto *John*, in the fulness of it, as it is in it self, other then in some darker representations of it, it would have overwhelmed *John*, and slain him : *No man can see me, and live*, saith God to *Moses*, *Exod.* 33. 18. when he desired God to shew him his glory : This representation unto *John* was so glorious, though in the likeness of man, that *John* professeth in verse 17. when he saw it, he fell at his feet as dead. If we cannot behold (without prejudice) the Sun in its glory, how can we behold the exceeding glory of the Creator, whose glory exceeds infinitely the glory of all the creatures, as far as infinity exceeds all finite Beings : the sight of the glory of that Majesty, would turn us into nothing : If the Lord should not condescend to our weakness, and shew up his Majesty under the form of man, there could be no communion between him and us. Oh the goodness of God, that condescends to our capacities !

From Christ's appearing in the mids of the seven golden Candlesticks, Note, That Christ sits as King and suprem Moderator and Governour in his Churches. And this is couched in these words, *In the mids of them* : for a King, suprem Captain, or Governour, sits in his throne, in the mids of his Nobles and servants, being environed about with attendants, for his greater Majesty.

This person here in the likeness of the Son of man, in the mids of the seven Candlesticks, which denotes Christ's Kingly Office, being farther described by his garments, being clothed with a garment down to the feet, betokening gravity and wisdom ; this sort of garment was worn of the Priests of old, and also of the Roman Senators, the Scribes and Pharisees, and Doctors of the Law, in Christ's time, *Math.* 22. 38, used also this kind of garment, and Christ here appears in this garb, which doth typically represent both

both his Priestly office, and his Prophetic office also; for the Priests and Prophets under the Law, were to be arrayed in such long garments, *Exod. 28. 42, 43. Lev. 6. 10.* and *Samuel* the Prophet ministered in such a garment, *1 Sam. 2. 18.* Hence observe.

That when Christ makes discovery of himself to his Churches, he desires to manifest himself in all his Offices. When he appears here among these Asian Churches in a Kingly way and Power, to chastise them for their backslidings, yet he appears too in a Sacerdotal garment, under his Priestly office, interceding for his poor backsliding people; and withal, exercises his Prophetic Office, in admonishing them to return to their first love, whom they had forsaken. Christ will not be wanting in any of his offices, for the good and benefit of his Churches; and therefore he is said here, *to be girt about the Paps with a golden Girdle*, which denotes Christ's readiness in all his offices for their good: consult *Luke 12. 35.* and *17. 8.* When the Romans of old did undertake any matter of action, they did use to truss up their long garments, for the better expedition in their actions; so Christ here is said to be girt with a precious and golden girdle, to manifest his readiness for his Churches service, either as King, to rule and chastise them, as a Priest, to intercede for them, and as a Prophet, to inform them.

Verse 14. *His head and hairs were white, as white wool, and as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire.*

Verse 15. *And his feet like unto fine bras, burning as in a Furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters.*

This appearance, or likeness of the Son of man, is farther described, to have his head and hairs white as wool, and as snow; and the Ancient of days in *Dan. 7. 9.* is ever under the same figures described; white hairs, and white head, shows gravity, age, and antiquity, worthy of all due reverence: according to that of the Poet,

Magna fuit quadam capit is reverentia Cani.

From this description, Note, That Christ as the Son of God, is of the same antiquity with the Father, even one and the same co-eterial God, blessed for ever: For God who is called the Ancient of days in that vision of *Daniel 7. 9.* manifested himself in the like appearance, as he doth here unto *John*; in the likeness of the Son of man; therefore is one and the same God, having the same incommunicable properties with the Ancient of days.

He is here farther described to have eyes as a flame of fire, and feet like unto fine bras, burning as in a furnace. *χαρακτήρ.* Eyes like a flame of fire, signifies either their piercing nature, in searching into the secrets of the heart; or of wrath and indignation, to terrifie his impenitent enemies: and indeed, Christ is here from head to feet, presented in a fiery colour; his eyes were as a flame

of

of fire, his feet like unto fine bras, as if they burned in a furnace. Hence Note.

Observe. 2. That when Christ is about executing acts of power and judgement against Kingdoms or Churches, he is most terrible in his appearance.

When he goes about to call to an account the seven Asian Churches, he is very intense about it, and all of a fiery colour: sparkling in the eyes like fire, does signify much anger and indignation; feet of burning bras, speed and execution: Christ is here presented in that fine posture; he is brought in, *Rev. 10. 1.* with his face shining as the Sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, whereupon presently followed terrible thunders, and dreadful judgements. So in chap. 2. v. 18. he is presented with eyes like fire, and feet like bras, and forthwith goes on with a charge against the Church of Thyatira. So in *Rev. 19. 10, 11, 12.* he is said to have his eyes like a flame of fire, and his vesture dipp'd in blood, and presently goes on in executing great wrath against his adversaries. The dreadfulness of this fiery Judge, when he comes in wrath, will better appear, if we consider that of the Prophet *Malachi 3. 2, 3.* *Who shall abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appears? for he is like a Refiners fire.* A Refiners fire is the hottest, most terrible, and most consuming. How terrible he is towards Babylon, both literal and mystical, consider *Jer. 51. 25.* and *Rev. 18. 8, 9, &c.* *I am against thee, oh destroying mountain* (speaking of Babylon) *which destroyest all the earth; I will stretch out my hand upon thee, and roul thee down from the Rock, and will make thee a burnt mountain.* This was fully executed on old Babylon in the letter. And how severe is Christ against Babylon in the mysterie! in *Rev. 18. 8.* *Her plagues shall come at one day, death, and sorrow, and famine, and she shall be burnt with fire; for strong is the Lord God which will condemn her.* Peruse the chapter throughout. When Christ goes forth on his red horse, to execute judgement, and to take peace from the earth, neither Kings, nor Captains, nor the mighty ones of the earth, shall be able to stand against this mighty one: *They shall call for the mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.* And *Paul* tells us *2 Thes. 1. 8.* of the dreadfulness of this Judge, who should come in flames of fire; to what end, to destroy Antichrist, the son of perdition, with the brightness of his coming: only consider once more *Rev. 19. 12, 13, &c.* When Christ goeth forth to make war in righteousness, his eyes were like a flame of fire, and was clothed in a garment dipp'd in blood, and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the heathen; for he shall rule them with a rod of iron, for he it is that treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of almighty God. All this doth clearly inform, that Christ hath another name, a strange name, that none knoweth but himself, *Rev. 19. 12,* that is, another nature and disposition to appear in, then of a Lamb: No man ever thought,

thought, that have only considered Christ in the state of his humiliation, that he had that Lion-like disposition in him: All Christ's adversaries shall one day know, that he is as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, whose voice shall be terrible unto them, as well as a Rock of defence and safeguard to all his chosen ones; and as sure as he hath already acted the Lamb-like part in his sufferings here on earth, and now doth the same in his Mediator's office in heaven, so he shall one day come with power and glory, to rule the Nations of the earth, that would not have him for their Lord and King, even with a Sceptre of power and judgement, and with a rod of iron. And to set forth the dreadfulness of this Judge the more, he comes with a Lion-like voice, roaring, as the sound of many waters. Hence Note,

Observ. 2. That when Christ comes to judge his enemies, he is not only dreadful in his looks, and outward appearance, but he is dreadful all over, even in his words also. In verse 10, his voice was as of a Trumpet, loud, and terrible; here, like the sound of many waters, very terrible to his enemies, but rousing, converting, and taving to his faithful ones.

Verse 16. *And he had in his right hand seven Stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword, and his face shone as the Sun shineth in its strength.*

Notwithstanding Christ's dreadful appearance, and his intense-ness unto judgement, yet he had in his right hand seven stars. In the right hand is seated the chiefest strength and power of man, and so it connotes to us safety and protection; and he takes the seven stars into his right hand, to preserve and keep them safe under his protection, whilst he is executing his judgements upon his impeni-tent backsliding churches, or obstinate enemies.

The seven stars the Spirit interprets to be the Angels of the seven churches, verse 20. of this chapter; only what is meant by Angels in that place, being mystically represented by the stars in Christ's right hand, I think fit to make enquiry here: Surely it can-not be meant Angels in a proper sense, such as are ministering Spirits, the Angels in heaven; for John is commanded in the next chapter to write unto those Angels of the church of Ephesus, Smyrna, &c. to write unto the Spirits Angelical; all know such a command would not proceed from him that is the wisdom of the Father; therefore this must needs be interpreted to be the chief Mi-nisters or Pastors of those Asian churches, who should rather be called here the Messengers, then the Angels of the churches; for the word in the Greek 'Αγγελος, is Messenger, which we translate Angel, when attributed to God's ministering Spirits; but when at-tributed unto man, more properly it should be rendered Messenger, and not Angel; as that of Peter, Acts 12. When he came and knocked at the door where the Disciples were, they thought it was his

his Angel, and not himself; that is his Messenger, one coming from him to acquaint them of his deliverance; for they could not be so ignorant to conceive that it was an Angel that knocked, which could enter without opening the doors; wherefore under correcti-on of better judgements, I shall account this amongst some of the mistakes of our Translators. Consult to this purpose, *Luke 7.24. Mat. 3.1.* and therefore it should be better rendered here, Messen-gers, write unto the Messengers of the seven churches: And the Ministers of the Gospel are so termed, because they are persons sent and commissionated by Christ, to preach, and teach his Go-spel amongst his churches, *Matth. 28.18.* Having cleared what is meant by the Angels, or seven Stars of the Asian churches, I shall draw these notes.

Observ. 1. Christ hath an especial eye of providence, and hand of protection over all his faithful Ministers of his Word, in the most terrible times of wrath and judgement. He takes them in his right hand, claps them under his wings for safety. *Noah* who was a preacher of righteousness, was preserved in the Ark, when all the world was drowned: Righteous *Lot*, was preserved, when So-dom flamed in fire: *Ezekiel, Daniel, Mordecai, &c.*, were preserved in Babylon, when the Inhabitants of Judah suffered all the mis-eries that an insolent Conquerour could lay upon them. How *Lu-ther* was preserved when all the antichristian world sought his ruine, is most admirable to consider: I have heard it related, that that most famous Minister of Christ, *Peter du Molyne*, was preserved in Pa-ris, being a sucking childe, by his Nurse under a tub, when the bloody massacres did not spare man, woman, or childe of the Re-formed Faith; that he might afterward become a star in the firmament of Christ's church. And the reason of all this is, they that are most engaged for Christ in his work and ministry, he does most engage for their safety and protection; Satan is their greatest ene-my, therefore Christ is their greatest friend and bulwark. Oh that all the Ministers of our churches were shining stars, faithful Angels, or rather, faithful Messengers of God's word and truth! Then Christ would carry them in his right hand of protection, and they should be as the apple of his eye unto him. The Angels, Messen-gers, or chief Ministers of these seven Asian churches are here re-presented by stars: Stars always in prophetical Scriptures, signifie eminency, splendour, light, and excellency. *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, thou son of the morning!* meaning *Nebu-chadnezzar*, *Isa. 14.12.* and *Rev. 18.10.* *I saw a star fall from heaven;* which connotes the fall of a most eminent, high, and ex-cellent person. From hence note.

2. Those that are the dispensers of Christ's mysteries, ought to be more eminent and excellent in knowledge and holiness, then o-ther inferiour christians. They are figured by stars, by the shining heavenly lamps, they are the salt of the earth, their lips should espe-cially preserve wisdom, they should be as stars of the greater magni-tude,

tude, shining in the firmament of their churches; they are the Overseers of the flock, to go in and out before them in soundness of life and doctrine: yet too, though their light be great, shining, and eminent, yet let them consider they are but stars, their light is borrowed from the Sun, they should not advance it to that pitch, as to make it an infallible light, but they should eye the Son, as the fountain of all true light, to keep them in their proper Sphere, and not to lord it over the Lord's inheritance: Let them remember too, that they are stars, whereof some may be erratique, as well as fixed ones; Christ alone is the true light, the true morning star, that whosoever shall receive light from this true Son of righteousness, he cannot be deceived, but at last shall be brought to the Father of all lights.

3. Another Note is, That the Ministers of Christ are in an high and honourable calling: They are figured under the types of stars, celestial lights, they have the same Titles of God's ministering spirits: The Angels, they are his Messengers, that goes on his errants, his Ambassadors, to treat with man about the great mysteries of heaven. Hence ariseth another corrolary; That all Christ's ministers, as they are stars, though differing from one another in glory, in parts, gifts, and graces, yet not differing in power, nor Lords over one another: They are Angels, that is, Messengers, Ambassadors, not Prince Cardinals, not Lord Bishops: Every church here had its Angel, its Bishop, its Pastor, its Elder; not many Bishops, not many Elders in a classical form over divers churches; but every church had its Angel, its Ministers, or Officers: Ephesus had its Angel, Smyrna its Angel, &c. not that Ephesus Angel, either singly, or joyned with two, three, or more, were superintendent over all the rest.

Here is a farther description of the terriblenes of the appearance of Christ in this vision, when he cometh in power and judgement: Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his face shone as the Sun in his strength. The sword of the mouth is taken in Scripture for the words or doctrine proceeding from the mouth, *Psalm 36. 5. Prov. 5. 4. Job 5. 15.* The word of Christ is here called a sharp two-edged sword, it cuts both sides, but in a diverse mode; it wounds the penitent, but for their recovery, and to bring them unto Christ, and so it is mighty in operation, *Heb. 4. 12.* And secondly, it is a destroying sword to his adversaries, *Rev. 19. 15. Out of his mouth went a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the heathen.*

Hence observe, Christ's word is very powerful, and piercing, it divides between the bone and the marrow, between the soul and the spirit; it is *Telum Achilleum, Achilles Spear,* that can both hurt and cure, kill and make alive.

But it may be here questioned, whether this figure of a two edged sword, that went out of the mouth of Christ, may not signifie and represent a material sword also.

I answer affirmatively, That Christ also is to use that sword which is to smite the heathen with, and that is a material one, for he is to rule

rule them with a rod of iron, *Rev. 19. 15.* Now how it can be understood that Christ is to smite the heathen with the sword of his mouth, that is, his word, or rule them with his word and doctrine, I see but small reason for such an interpretation; and seeing too, when he does this, it is in fierceness, treading the wine-press of the wrath of almighty God.

But then some may say, Does Christ judge and smite his enemies only by the material sword?

I answer, No; first he goes out with the sword or spirit of his mouth, to wit, his divine truth and word, to make manifest, destroy, and overthrow all antichristian Idolatry and Worship, *2 Thes. 2.* Then secondly, he goes out on the red Horse of war, with a material sword, to destroy the Beast, and the false Prophet, and their adherents; and they are so smitten and destroyed, that the Fowls of the Air are called to the prey, to eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit upon them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great, *Rev. 19. 18.* and this is to be executed by the sword that proceeded out of his mouth, *v. 21.* and how this can be effected by the word of his mouth, I know not, otherwise then by moving and working powerfully on the hearts of such instruments as God shall command and employ to take the material sword in hand, for the ruine of antichrist, and to effect this work of wrath and judgement. Collate to this, the Notes on the two precedent verses, *14. & 15.*

And his face shone as the Sun shineth in his strength. This shows farther the resplendency of this vision, His face is likened to the Sun in his glory: There was much and great glory in this vision, and yet all this is but like the Sun in his glory. If it were the glory of ten thousand Suns united in one, yet would be short of the essential glory of the Son of God; it is neither expressible nor comprehensible by any of all the creatures, but here is presented by things beneath its excellency, that according to man's weaknes, we may perceive a little of his glory; for no man yet ever could see the glory of God, and live.

Hence Note, That the execution of Justice and Judgement, is a glorious administration. Christ's face shone as the Sun in his strength, when he was about to call his delinquent and offending churches to an account for their backslidings, in chap. 10. v. 1. & 3. his face was as it were the Sun in that appearance also; but then presently followed thunders, and voices, as when a Lion roareth, to denote unto us, when Christ was going forth with terrible judgments upon the world, his carriage and appearance therein was most glorious: and it is said in *Exod. 15. 6.* upon the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the red Sea, *Thy right hand, O God, is become glorious in power, thy right hand hath dashed in pieces the enemy, and in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee.* The acts of God's power and justice do shine

so clearly in the world, that they dazzle mens eyes and hearts, and makes them tremble before God: So likewise it is amongst the children of men, not any Magistrates, Commonwealths, or Nations, are more honourable, shining, and dreadful to their enemies, then such as keep close to the rules of Justice and judgement against offenders. Never was *Solomon* more glorious in all his reigne, then when he executed justice between the two Harlots, and called for the Sword to decide the controversie. How honourable was *Phineas* and what a high reward he got, for executing justice and judgement? It was an old saying, *Fiat Justitia, & ruat Cælum*. If our chief Magistrates keep close to Justice in our Land and Commonwealth, our Nation will shine as the Sun in its strength, none of the Nations round about will be able to look us in the face, for the power and glory of the Lord will be upon us.

Verse 17. *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead; then he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, fear not, I am the first and the last.*

Verse 18. *And I am alive, but I was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen: And I have the Keys of hell and death.*

When *John* had taken a view of this appearance of the Son of man, and of that great and dreadful Majesty and Glory that he appeared in, it struck him as dead, at his feet.

Hence Note, That the sight of Divine glory, is the most effectually and humbling sight: When the Prophet *Isaiah* had a sight of this glory, he could cry out, *I am a man undone, and of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.* Isa. 6. 5. When a soul comes to see this glory, it brings him to a true sight of his own worthlessness, and to an abhorrence in his own eyes: There is no greater, or more efficacious way to take off our hearts from the creature, then to behold the vast disproportion between the glory of God, and our poor selves. *All flesh is as grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field,* Isa. 40. 5, 6. and why? *Because the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.* And when *Job* had a sight of this glory, he cryed out, *Job 42. 5. Now mine eyes see thee, I abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes.*

Observe, 2, That Revelations of Divine glory, are dreadfully glorious. They struck *John* as dead: There did but Angels appear in an inferiour glory unto *Gideon*, and *Manoah*, and made those Worthies quake, *Judg. 16. & 13.* Apparitions of glory works strongly upon the spirits, and quickly overwhelms them: And if the glory of the creatures is so resplendent, how is the glory of God to be born, who dwells in the light, which no man can approach unto? *1 Tim. 6. 16.* *Paul* could not behold that glorious light that shined about him, *Act. 9.* but was stricken to the ground, and blinded

blinded with it. In the Earth, Heavens, and World, we may behold the glory of God in part, and as in a glass; but his essential glory, as it is himself, wherein he makes his habitation, is, that light which no man can approach to, or comprehend, and live; and therefore when it is but left out to appear but in some likeness, or similitude of man; Fire, or the like, it works such terrible effects upon the beholders of it. *Abraham* fell to the ground when he had this glory appeared to him, *Gen. 17. 3.* The three Disciples, when they had but a taste of this glory, at the Transfiguration in the Mount, they fell upon their faces to the earth.

Now the reasons that the appearance of Divine glory is so dreadful, are, First, Because the Majesty of God is partly in those visions, and the luster that accompanies it, is too high and burdensome for mortal eye. Secondly, That it may breed an awe and reverence in us, of, and unto the Divine Majesty. When *Israel* saw the lightning, and heard the Thunder in the Mount, all the people in the Camp trembled. *Exod. 19. 16.* Thirdly, It is to prepare a soul for entertainment of what God hath to speak unto it: Our souls are quite out of temper by reason of lusts, cares, fears, and the world, to have converse with God: This prepares them for this Divine communion.

Ques. Here a question may be made, whether the blessed heavenly Spirits, Angels, or blessed Souls, or glorified persons after the resurrection, shall or do see the essential glory of God: Though it were granted, mortal eye cannot see this glory, yet those blessed glorified creatures may?

I answer, That I am swayed for the negative. My reasons are, Because God's essential glory is himself, and God is invisible, and that glory inaccessible, and no farther, and in no other way to be seen and comprehended by any created being then himself thinks good to propound it in; and this hath hitherto from the beginning been God's method in the representations of himself under shapes, figures, and similitudes, fitted to the capacity of the creature: 'tis true, I confess Saints in heaven, and Angels, have a greater manifestation of the Glory of God, then Saints on earth, by reason of their glorified Organs, fitted to receive that high measure of glory, to compleat their vessels with all true and perfect blessedness, but still remember they are creatures, and will be still so, though glorified and immortal ones; Now how a finite creature can see or comprehend an infinite Glory or Majesty, I know not, otherwise then by condescensions to their capacities, and finite natures, If a finite creature (as Angel, or glorified Saint) could see and comprehend an infinite, then what is seen or comprehended, it were not infinite: and if an infinite could be comprehended of the finite, the finite would it self become infinite: Neither can infinite be seen in parts; for it is not possible therefore not to be seen at all. Therefore I am of opinion, that God, and his essential glory, is seen of Angels, and glorified Saints, not as in himself, infinitely glorious; but

but by way of condescension, in some resemblance, likeness, figure, or representation, above our reach to consider; But I conceive the glory of God will be most eminently seen to glorified Saints, in the face of Jesus Christ; God did always appear in the likeness of the Son of man, when he did appear to his Prophets before the Incarnation of Christ; the Saints saw God in the face of Jesus Christ, when he was on earth; for he was the express Image of his Father: And they that hope to see God and his glory at the resurrection, shall see him most gloriously, and most eminently, in the face of the Son of man, *Rev. 22. 3, 4. The Throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.*

Object. But some may say, Do not the Angels behold always the face of the Father in heaven? *Math. 18. 10.*

I answer, It is true, they are in the special presence of God, and have a most high and eminent fruition and communion with God, but the manner unutterable, and inexpressible; for in this sense you must understand it, and not literally; for God hath not a face in heaven: and consider as before, they are creatures, and the Father is infinite and invisible.

Object. 2. But did not *Moses* and *Jacob* see God, and talked with him face to face, and mouth to mouth? *Exod. 33. 11. Gen. 32. Numb. 12. 8.*

I answer, Those Prophets and Patriarchs did see God, but how? Not essentially, but under divers resemblances; for in his own nature he is invisible: as that of *1 Tim. 6. 16. Whom no man hath seen, or can see:* and that of *John 1. 18.* is downright, *No man hath seen God at any time;* either by corporeal vision, or by intellectual natural vision, for they are weak and imperfect, and cannot comprehend that which is most infinitely perfect in it self: And for this reason also, the blessed celestial Spirits cannot comprehensively see God, by reason of their imperfection, comparatively, to that most perfect Divine Being, who only is able to comprehend himself unto perfection.

Secondly I answer, *Moses* nor *Jacob* never saw the Divine Essence, nor any other; Because that is pure, unmixed, and always alike, but that of God they saw, was under some resemblance; sometimes of a cloud, sometimes of the likeness of fire, sometimes of man, &c. that under the exhibition of those visible and sensible figures, they might perceive God, who was invisibly represented to the understanding by these visible glories.

Thirdly and lastly, To see God face to face in Scripture, imports only two things; First, a familiar converse, as that of *Exod. 33. 1. Deut. 5. 4.* the Lord speaks to *Moses* face to face, and mouth to mouth, as a friend speaks with his friend. Secondly, it signifies a more clear sight of God, with greater perspicuity and clearness. Some saw God in Dreams and Visions, which were in dark resemblances; but *Moses* had more clear and illustrious visions of God:

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To this purpose is that of *1 Cor. 13. 12. Then shall we see face to face,* that is, in heaven we shall enjoy and see God more perfectly, and more fully, than here on earth; and then we shall see God in like manner, or in some such way as the life of man is now seen by the bodily eyes, by the intervention of something else, and so do become sensible and perceptible to the understanding. Jesus Christ will be the great and special mirror, wherein glorified Saints will see the Deity, and the Father.

Object. 3. But do not all Divines hold, that in heaven we shall enjoy the beatiful vision? And doth not that of *1 John 3. 2.* import so much; *We shall see him as he is?*

I answer first, The highest Saint in glory will not be able to see all of God in eternal life, though to see and know this little of God that we see here, is life eternal.

Secondly, I answer, It is true, in heaven we shall see God in that manner, and thorow those mediums he is pleased to manifest himself in: And that we shall see him as he is, that is, as he is to be seen, in a new and unexpressible way of glory: We see now the Sun beams, and we sensibly perceive the light, efficacy, and virtue of the Sun, yet we cannot possibly behold the nature of it. In like manner, in heaven the blessed souls shall see the beams and rays of the glory of God, and shall live in the light and power thereof, but shall never comprehend the nature of it. O Lord, grant that we may so live here to thy glory, that in the world to come we may be partakers of thy self and glory, who will then resolve us of all our doubts, and will also unvail so much of thy self unto us, as will make us most perfectly blessed.

When *John* was in this humbled state and consternation, as dead at the feet of the glorious apparition of Christ, in the likeness of the Son of man, then he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last. The hand of the Lord hath divers senses in Scripture: First, for judgment, or punishment: *The hand of the Lord shall be upon thee, and thou shalt be blind,* saith *Paul to Elymas, Acts 13. 11.* Secondly, It is taken for prophesie: When God stirred up the sons of men to prophesie, then it is said, *That the hand of the Lord was upon them:* as *Ezek. 13. 3. And the hand of the Lord was upon me:* that is, God stirred up mightily on my Spirit to Prophesie. Thirdly, It is taken for the Spirit of God, as the hand, and especially the right hand, is the symbol of the strength of man; so the Spirit is the strength and power of the most High: In these two latter senses, Christ lays his right hand on *Iohn.* First, upon his consternation, he gives him the spirit of Prophesie, elevates and excites *John's* spirit to see Divine mysteries: And secondly, gives him his Spirit of strength, power, and consolation, which might subdue all his carnal conceits and fears, and so remove all impediments whatsoever, that hindered him in that work which God would have him to undertake; and therefore comes in with consolation, and bids *John* fear not, for I am the first and the last.

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From this, Note.

That those that are stricken low, and humbled by God, are fittest to be risen by God for the reception of his choicest divine truths and mysteries. *John* was stricken as dead with his glory, and then heard a voice, Fear not, but write the things that thou shalt see, to the seven Churches. When the Prophets *Ezekiel* and *Daniel* were fallen down on their faces, then they were lifted by the Spirit, and received glorious visions: We must let all our own go, our false confidences, and carnal props, as of our own parts, our graces, our eminency in gifts, and the like, if we will be fit auditors for Christ; we must fall down at the feet of his Throne, if we expect an answer from his Throne. *Moses* a meek man, yea the meekest of all men, he received the choicest favours from God's hand; for he spake to him mouth to mouth, and face to face. *Deut. 34.10.*

He laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, fear not. Hence secondly Note,

That the hand of Christ, or his Spirit, is not only a most powerful, but also a comforting and consolating Spirit. This is the Comforter, that takes off all tears from *John*: It is the Spirit of God that does convince, it is the Spirit of God that converts; it is the Spirit that doth inspire godly men, it is the Spirit that sanctifies, it is the Spirit that comforts, the Spirit is the great Agent, and hand of God, by which God doth all his works. Christ here in the likeness of the Son of man, was but as a terrible apparition unto *John*, it served only to strike him dead, before he laid his right hand upon him, to comfort and support him: so the sight or knowledge of Christ in the Gospel, without the co-operation of his holy Spirit, is but as a terrible sight and knowledge, that makes for the greater condemnation: Christ unto some may be a rock of offence, and a stumbling stone, whilst unto others that have his Spirit, he is the rock of salvation, and the corner stone, which is sure and precious. O lay thy right hand, O Lord, upon thy servant, give him thy Spirit, that he may know thy Will and mind in thy Word, and serve thee without fear.

Obser. 3. That Christ is full of bowels of grace and compassion, towards all such as he smites and humbles. The sight of Divine glory being the most effectual thing unto poor, frail, worthless creatures, God follows it with the greatest comfort, and sweetest consolations. No sooner does Christ appear unto *John* in his glory, that makes him fall at his feet as dead, but presently Christ lays his right hand upon him, and he hears his comforting word, saying, Fear not: Christ would not leave *John* in that spiritless and livelieis condition, that the glory of the Vision had affected him with, but quickly raises him, and comforts him again, with the most effectual and sweetest consolations. Christ is our merciful high Priest, and that good compassionate Samaritan, who is so affected and touched with our wounds and infirmities, *Luk. 10.33. Heb 4.15.* and that more especially, with such hurts and wounds that proceeds

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from his own hand, that he is most ready at hand with the oil and wine, the Grace of his Gospel, and Blood of his Covenant, to pour into our wounded souls, for peace, healing, and consolation. *Job* after he was stricken and humbled by the hand of God, and came to a true sight of the hand that did it, *His captivity is turned into joy, and comforts are multiplied*, *Job 42.5, 6, &c.* *Daniel* after he was afflicted, and humbled for his own sins, and the sins of his forefathers, cap. 4. *Then the Lord sent Gabriel to comfort him, and to tell him, that he was a man greatly beloved*, ver. 22. God does not throw down, afflict, wound, or humble any of his servants, to leave them so; but forthwith, or within a short time, reaches out his right hand, and lays it upon them, to raise them up, and to comfort them.

Obser. 4. Another Note from this comforting word of Christ, saying, Fear not, is; That the Word of Christ being conjunct with the Hand of Christ, his Spirit is the most effectual comfort to a wounded spirit. The Word without the Spirit is ineffectual in its operations; *John* had lain still as a senseless and dead person, notwithstanding the word and voice of Christ, if he had not lain his hand upon him also: The word is of little power, if the efficacy of the Spirit be not in it; without this it is but a dead letter: That word of Christ which is powerful and efficacious, carries the Spirit with it; the same word goes forth unto all, and works from common gifts in some; so many are called: But that that makes it a distinguishing powerful word, is the concomitancy of the Spirit of grace; and so, few are chosen. When therefore we find in Scriptures such expressions, as that the Word is the incorruptible seed, the power of God to salvation, the word of life, sharper than a two-edged sword, and the like: These, and the like phrases, we must understand, not as if the Word were such in it self without the Spirit, but conjunctively, when the Word is made the chariot of the Spirit, and the Spirit is made the life and power of the Word. The Word without the Spirit, is only a voice void of virtue and operation; and the Spirit without the medium of the Word, works not ordinarily, but both conjunct together, makes up that true dispensation of the Gospel, which is called the ministration of the Spirit, *2 Cor. 3.8.* and the Grace of God that brings salvation, *Tit. 2.11.* God is light it self, and the Father of lights; yet the Sun is not useless, but by it he enlightens us: so the Spirit of God is the Comforter, and the Sanctifier, but does both comfort, sanctifie, and perform all other his offices and works, in, by, and through the Word. O Lord, sanctifie and comfort us by thy Word and Spirit; for thy Word is Truth, and the power of our God unto salvation.

Obser. 5. The last Note that I shall raise from these words, *And he laid his right hand upon me, &c.* shall be, That Christ doth fully furnish in some good measure, with the gifts and graces of his Spirit, all such as he calls and employs in the great offices of his church.

First, he lays his right hand upon *John*, intimating his designation, enthalment, and confirmation in his Prophetic office: for, as Imposition of hands was the solemn, and the ultimate compleat act in Ordination, unto all Offices in the Church, so Christ here follows his own method used in his churches; he lays his right hand upon him: but here lies the difference; men may lay their hands on, that is, bestow offices on men, but cannot add power to execute those offices; but Christ not only lays his hand on, makes *John* a Prophet, but fills him with his Spirit also. Whom Christ calls unto offices in his church, he lays his right hand upon them, he fills them with his Spirit. *John* before he received his confirmation in his Prophetic office, and the command to write his visions, and what he saw, unto the churches; had in the first place, divine visions of Christ in the likeness of the Son of man, and was struck as dead with the glory thereof; whereupon Christ laid his hand of comfort upon him, and he heard that rousing voice, saying, *Fear not*: The case and condition of such persons that are called to the Ministerial offices in the church, should in some measure run parallel with *John's*. First, They ought to have clear visions of Christ, found knowledge in the mysteries of the Gospel. Secondly, under the apprehension of divine glory and their own corruption, they ought to be humble, and lie low at the feet of Christ, to be patterns unto others in humility, self-denial, and other graces. Thirdly, They ought to be sensible of Christ's hand upon them; that is, his spirit, which will manifest it self in their sanctified desires, willingness and readiness unto the work of the Lord. Fourthly and lastly, They ought to hear that rousing word of comfort within; *Fear not*: that is, the comfortable experience of the Spirit in their own souls, *Fear not*, which will raise them to a holy confidence, to declare the mind of God in all things, and not to fear the faces of men; for *the righteous are as bold as a Lion*. This endowment with the Spirit, was that that was principally looked at in the chusing of Officers, in the Acts of the Apostles, yea even Officers of the lowest form. Consult *Acts* 6. 3. and 9. 17. 11. 24. and 13. 2. unless men have the Spirit of Christ in them in some fulness of it, they are neither fit for those holy functions, nor can satisfactorily persuade themselves or others, that they are called of God unto them.

Vers. 18. I am the first and the last; and I am alive, but I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.

That this person that is here spoken of, was Christ, is clear; to avoid repetitions, peruse the precedent 8 and 13 verses: but here lies the difficulty.

Object. It was formerly asserted on vers. 13, that this was the divine person of Christ that appeared unto *John* in the form of a man; now according to his divine nature, he is impassible, he did not suffer death, nor was again made alive, for he is life it self; therefore

therefore this is only proper to his humanity, and that was it, to wit, his humane nature, that appeared unto *John*; that which was now alive, and was dead.

To clear this, I answer, you must understand that is frequent in Scripture, to attribute that unto one nature, which is the proper attribute of the other; and so as the Learned calls it, *communicatio idiomatum*, by the communication of properties, what is due unto the divine nature, is communicated, or attributed unto the humane, and so on the contrary: as to instance, When we are said to be bought, justified, or saved by the blood of God; wherein we must not be so gross, to conceive that God hath blood, but it is meant of that person who cleansed us by his blood, was both Man and God in one person; and that which is proper to the humane nature, is here attributed unto the divine: And so when it is said that God suffered, and the Son of man created all things, and 'twas he that was with the Father from everlasting: This is predicated of one nature, which is proper to the other. Consult *Acts* 20.28.

And so in this verse, though it is said, that Christ in his divine person appeared unto *John*, under the similitude of the Son of man, who is alive, but was dead, imports only thus much; That that similitude or form that appeared unto *John*, was the very same Christ, and Divine Person, that was conjunct with his humanity in heaven, and by a mutual and interchangeable communication, and attribution of properties, this divine Idea, or Representation, that *John* saw, is called by the proper attribution of Christ's humanity, which was pierced, dead, and lived again; though indeed it was only the divine person of Christ, clothed with the figure and likeness of the Son of man, which was dead, but was now alive. This is very usual in Scripture, and amongst Divines, wherein the properties of one nature are really attributed to the person denominated of the other nature interchangeably, by reason of the unity of person consisting in both natures.

Secondly I answer, That oft in Scripture that hath the real denomination of a thing, which is only so in appearance and resemblance. That apparition, or counterfeit of *Samuel* that appeared unto *Saul* at the Witch of Endors, is called *Samuel* several times in *1 Sam. 28*, without any note of distinction from the true and real Prophet *Samuel*, further then is collected from scriptural reason and the coherence of the discourse in that place: Angels that appeared in the form and likeness of men to *Jacob*, *Lot*, &c. are called men, because they appeared in humane form: so this divine appearance of Christ here, is called the same person that was dead, but is now alive; because he appeared in that shape and figure of the Son of man, which was dead, but is now alive.

And behold I am alive for evermore, Amen. As he is the first and the last, the first before all beginnings, and the last to all eternity, so Christ assures all his in this place, he is the same for ever to them, a King to rule and protect them, a Mediator to intercede for them,

a Prophet, to teach and direct them unto everlasting, Amen, so be it, so it shall be, and so it must be. And he adds,

And I have the Keys of hell and death.] Christ to take off all fear from *John*, and to assure *John*, and all his Saints, that he is most powerful, and able to effect and bring to pass those visions and predictions that he was about to reveal unto *John*, and by him unto his churches, he now publisheth unto *John*, that all power now is put into his hand from the Father, even over hell it self, for he hath despoiled it of its power : Here is a transporting of the word hell before death : Hell is the sting of death, and therefore according to order of things, the last : *Rev. 20. 14.* so death and hell were cast into the Lake of fire. Take hell here for the grave, or the state of the dead : so Christ hath the key to open it in the resurrection ; so hath power to deliver them from the state of death and hell. Or secondly, Take death and hell for the state of the damned, and he hath power over that too ; he holds the key of the bottomless pit, *Rev. 20. 1.* as he hath obtained power since his exaltation, to give Crowns and Thrones to all his faithful ones, that shall persevere and overcome ; so also to chastise his impenitent and obstinate adversaries with hell and death. The Keys in Scripture do signify Power, Dominion, and Rule : He that keeps and commands the keys of a City, hath the Power and Rule over it : The Keys were anciently carried before the chief Magistrate, and are in some places at this present time, as symbols and badges of authority. On Peter's honourable confession in *Mat. 16. 19.* the Keys of the Kingdom of heaven is given unto him by Christ, which intimates the power of shutting and loosing, which was by Christ deposited in the Church. It is said in the third chapter, that *Christ hath the key of David, that shuttest, and no man openeth; and openeth, and no man shutteth* : and in chap. 20. v. 1. Christ is there represented by an Angel that had the key of the bottomless pit. All this connotes,

Observe. That Christ hath the full power over all powers, and principalities of darkness, over the devil, and death, and hell it self, which before he hath attained and purchased by his death, *1 Cor. 15. 55, &c.* they cannot move nor stir to the destruction of souls, but as he permits them ; it is a most vain conceit, yea, and favours of little faith, in those that think that the godly, or faithful ones of Christ, are in the hands of Devils or Witches, to be hurt by them, or tormented at their pleasures : Christ hath the Keys of hell and death, the wicked Angels are so surely locked in their prisons, and reserved in chains up by his providence, that they cannot possibly touch any one of those that are dear to God, no not to hurt a hair of their head, or the least lamb in their fold, without Christ's special commission for it ; and then too, they are like a dog in a chain, under his hand and direction, to go thus far, and no farther : The Devil could not touch *Job*, who was hedged about by God, before he bid him go : And therefore, O ! How reasonless

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less and weak it is to affirm or hold, that they are in the Devil's power, to touch or hurt at his pleasure, for whom Christ hath laid down his most precious blood, and are as dear unto him, as the apple of his eye ; but if at any time God shall give any of his into the hand of Satan, to be touched by him, either in person or goods, let us consider, it is either to withdraw and wean us from sin, and to bring us to repentance for it, or else to winnow and try us, whether we will blest the name of God or not : In such cases, which seldom God exercises his children under, for few are able to bear such temptations, and God will lay no more on his, then they are able to bear ; the most high and eminent in grace, are only fit to meet with such strong tryals, and not sink under them, as *Job*, and *Paul*, whom Satan buffeted ; but if God shall use the hand of Satan, to smite any of his children, let them look upon God as the principa! Mover, and Author of it ; and though Satan be the Instrument, yet to say with wise and godly *Job*, The Lord hath done it ; *The Lord taketh, and the Lord giveth, Blessed be the name of the Lord.*

Observe. 2. Another observation hence is, That Christ's obstinate enemies, according to the Prophesies in this Book, may expect and look for a most sure and certain ruine and destruction. For here Christ says unto *John*, *Fear thou not John*, that is, of the truth and execution of those dreadful predictions, and judiciary visions, which I shall now make known unto thee, concerning those high, implacable, and obstinate enemies of mine ; they may think I have not power to execute those judgements upon them, but they shall know, that I have the keys of hell and death, that Satan is at my command and beck, to be the executioner of my wrath upon them, and that I have power to open the door of Hell, death, and destruction, and to shut them up, together with Satan, in that Lake of fire, that burneth with fire and brimstone for evermore, *Rev. 19. 20.* and *20. 10.*

Hence two Uses arise very naturally. First, That the godly need not fear hell nor death, either that of the grave, or that of the second death ; for Christ their head is the Key-keeper of both, and hath power thereof.

Next, Let the impenitent, wicked, and such as will not have Christ to reign over them, fear and tremble ; for he has the keys of hell and death : Therefore repent in time, and kiss the Son, lest he be angry, before the day come, wherein he shall stir, and no man openeth.

Verse 19. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall come after:

Verse 20. The mystery of the seven Stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden Candlesticks, is this, The seven Stars, are the Angels of the seven Churches, and the seven Candlesticks which thou sawest, are the seven Churches.

After Christ had fitted and confirmed *John* in his Prophetical Office, by laying his hand upon him, and by giving his Spirit to him, and assuring him, that it was he that is the first and the last, that is alive, but was dead, and had the power over hell and death, most able and mighty therefore to bring to pass, and execute all the dreadful predictions and visions which Christ should make known unto him, and being thus qualified and confirmed, he receives his commission to write the things that he had seen, and the things which are; that is, to Record these things which he had seen, and were represented to him, by, and in the precedent visions, which relate unto things that are present, and in being; to wit, God's discovery of his will and judgements, towards the famous seven Asian churches, some whereof had much backslidden from their native purity, which the first, second, and third chapters do treat of, as things that were then present, and in being. Next, *John* is commanded to write the things which shall come after; that is, he is to record visions and things which he shall see, which are related unto the future.

Observe. Hence Note, That this book of Prophesies is not only a Historical relation and discovery, under hyeroglyphick figures of things present, but also of things to come: *John* is commanded to write to the then seven Asian churches, and that as an Introduction to all the future Prophesies; and this is that that is intimated in cap. 5. v. 1. where a book is represented, written within and without; within, that is, secret, sealed under seven Seals, and their end yet in part to come: written without, that is, plain for discovery, open to the view: All which imports, that *John* was to write of the then present state of Affairs, and of the churches, which was plain and open, and as of things that are: and also of the future state of things, which are as a book written within, sealed and secret, in respect of their futurity.

2. Another Note hence is, That God's true Prophets, and faithful Ministers, will commend no more to the observation of their churches, as visions from God, then what they have really seen, and hath been discovered from God unto them: They are not to come with the word of the Lord in their mouth, and pretend visions from God, like the false prophets in *Jer.* 14, whiles their mouths and hearts are full of lying vanities. *John* writes no more then what he saw to the seven churches, nor discovers no more then what he

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saw was then present, or should come to pass in after time. *What we haue seen and heard, saith the Apostle, we speak, and are bold to preach, and to commend unto you.* Christ's Ministers should press no more then what they are assured are experienced truths: I doubt me, every opinion concerning outward forms of Government, Discipline, and the like, will not at last appear to be visions of God, which some do now a days so hotly contend for, it may be one day said unto such hot-spurs. *Boanerges, sons of Thunder:* who required such things at your hands? whiles you let the greatest works, as of love, righteousness, and judgement, lie prostrate at your feet, as if they did not concern you.

Vers. 20. *The mysterie of the seven Stars, &c.*] Christ in the last verse, to make things plain unto *John*, and to give him a taste of the discovery of those mysteries in his book, interprets the mystery of the vision of seven Stars, and of the seven Candlesticks, presented unto his sight in the precedent 12 and 16 verses, and he calls it, the mysterie of seven Stars and candlesticks; because indeed unto *John* it was a secret and hidden thing, what those figures of stars and candlesticks did mystically mean or represent; and unto *John* it would be still a mysterie, if Christ himself had not here interpreted. Hence Note,

That this book of Revelations is made clear, obvious, and manifest, by a diligent observation, and a right application of the mystical characters and figures of each vision: Christ himself in this verse, hath made the first enterance and essay on this account: He tells us, that the seven Stars in his right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks, do mystically represent the seven Angels, or Messengers of his churches, and the seven candlesticks, the churches themselves. In the seventeenth chapter Christ is more large in interpreting the mysterie of Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, &c. All which connores unto us.

Observe. That the wise observant christian, may attain unto the revelation and discovery of the mysteries of this book of Prophesies by the help of the Spirit of God, upon a diligent enquiry thereinto: The Spirit says often in the second and third chapters, *Let him that hath an ear, hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches:* and in chap. 13. vers. 18. *Here is wisdom, let him that hath wit count the number:* *Here is the mind that hath wisdom,* cap. 17. v. 9. So that it is for him that hath an ear, an intelligent understanding ear, and wisdom, a wise heart to consider, that is fit and capable to open and apply aright the mysteries of this book: It is a mystery therefore difficult to all, but unto the spiritualized eye, and unto the mind, that hath wisdom; but it should not therefore be accounted presumption in such, to undertake this essay, seeing it hath pleased Christ to give us the first fruits himself, in opening the mysteries of the vision of the seven stars, and the seven golden candlesticks, which is as an enterance into the whole; and since he hath interpreted unto us, that by the seven stars are meant the seven Angels of the

the churches ; by the seven golden candlesticks, the seven famous Asian churches ; by the woman arrayed in scarlet, the mother of harlots in the seventeenth of the Revelations, to be the great City that reigneth over the Kings of the earth ; and the Beast with seven heads and ten horns, to signifie a Government, Empire, or Kingdom on seven Mountains, where the great harlot reigneth under ten Kings ; why should it be thought strange, rash, or presumptuous, to interpret the rest of the mystical figures, and heroglyphick characters of this book, according to their natural and genuine tendency, and as they are opened and applyed in other prophetical writings, by one and the same Spirit of Prophecy ; whose wisdom it was ever from the beginning, to represent the risings, progress, and downings of the great Empires and Kingdoms of the world, by such dark and mysterious figures and representations, unto God's servants, his Prophets : And conceive one great reason of this dark and mysterious carriage of the Spirit, is, That the Intentions of God towards the Powers and Kingdoms of the world, may be revealed and made known but unto few, such as have spirits suitable, and wills to conform to the will of God in all things ; for if those great events, and revolutions of State were made vulgar, and known unto all, it would raise innumerable combustions in the world, and great sufferings and afflictions to the children of God, from those Powers that they live under, for whose sakes these great concussions and subversions of States and Kingdoms do come to pass, that Christ's and their Interest may be exalted at the last.

2. Note. That it is the Spirit of Christ in his Word, that makes known, and opens the secrets of all Divine mysteries unto his servants. Christ discovers unto *John* those mysteries of stars, &c. It is this Spirit that searcheth into the deep things of God : He shall take of mine (as Christ saith, *John* 16. 15. and shall show it unto you : and hence he is called the Comforter ; because he makes the love of the Father, and the grace of Christ, which was before-hand hid in the bosom and counsel of God, manifest unto poor souls, and so sheds abroad the love of God in their hearts by faith. The discovery of Divine mysteries, are too high a work for the ablest and wisest person in his natural capacity ; without the help of Christ's Spirit ; for they are spiritually, not carnally to be discerned.

But to proceed, The mysterie of the seven stars, Christ interprets to be the Angels of the seven churches. Stars in all prophetical writings, do signifie persons of eminency and honour ; and in Heraldry, it is accounted the most noble sort of blazoning, peculiar alone to the Armory of Princes. The Angels of the seven churches, or rather Messengers, for so the Greek word signifies, because they come with the best message and news that ever came to man ; to wit, the glad tydings of peace through Jesus Christ, and therefore beautiful are their feet, and so may rightly be represented mystically or figuratively by those lightsome and noble creatures,

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the stars ; but to prevent tediousness in repetition, I refer to the Notes on the precedent sixteenth verse, where I have fully discussed the same subject.

And the mystery of the seven golden Candlesticks, Christ interprets to be the seven Churches ; to wit, in *Ephes*, *Smyrna*, *Pergamus*, &c. In *Exodus* 25. amongst the Aderements and Instruments of the Tabernacle, God commanded *Moses* to make a Candlestick of Beaten Gold ; Christ in this verse takes up the Figures and Types of seven golden Candlesticks, to represent mystically his Tabernacles with men, his seven famous Asian Churches, wherein his glorious presence did most resplendently appear : for it is said verse 13. That he appeared in the midst of them, in great luster, glory, and splendour. Golden Candlesticks are fit Types and Emblemes to represent Christ's churches : First, In respect of their choicest mettal ; they are golden Candlesticks.

Observe. Christ's churches are of that precious allay and temper, that they excel all other assemblies in the world. Others of the world, though never so great and eminent, are but as Lead or Tin, but those like precious gold. Secondly, Gold is the most tryed and refined mettal that is ; so are Christ's churches, they go under seven fold refinements : They have tryals from God and man : Refinements by afflictions, refinements by the Spirit of Grace, whereby their dross is done away, and so become most precious and shining gold. Thirdly, Gold is the most noble, dearest, and highest esteemed mettal amongst men, so Christ's churches are the most highly respected by God of all creatures, the world was made for their sakes, yea they are the right heirs, that is, that have the more especial right, by blessing, promise, and compact, unto the world, and the good things thereof, whether things present, or things to come ; why, all is yours, if Christ be yours, *1 Cor.* 3. 23. Fourthly, It is the most extensive and ductible of all mettals ; so Christ's churches they have the largest bowels of true charity of any sort of people in the world, for they will endeavour the conversion, and pray for it, even of their very enemies. Fifthly, Gold is the most weighty of all mettals : Christ's churches are of the greatest weight with God, all others are but as the dust of the ballance in comparison of them ; they are of such weight with God, that they are to stand in the gap, to stay the hand of God when he goes out to execute his judgements : If two or three righteous persons be in a City, God will not destroy it for their sakes. Sixthly, and lastly, Gold is most fair and shining of all mettals : so Christ's churches, they are most shining in their graces, they are not gilded Candlesticks, but golden ones ; yea beaten ones, as that of the Tabernacle was, *Thou art all fair, saith Christ to his Spouse in Cant. 1. my Love, behold thou art fair, behold thou art fair, like a Lilly among the Thorns, so is my Love among the daughters. Cant. 2. 2.*

In the next place, consider the Types and Figures ; the seven Candle-

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Candlesticks that are the emblemes of those seven Churches, and how they suit fitly for this purpose, all know ; The proper work of Candlesticks is to contain and hold their shining lamps or candles, as in *Exod. 25. 37. And thou shalt make the seven Lamps thereof, and the Lamps thereof shalt thou put thereon, to give light toward that that is before it.* As the golden Candlestick of the Tabernacle was to have seven lamps or lights, to give light to all that was before it, so these seven golden Candlesticks, those seven Asian churches, have their seven Lamps or lights therein, which number denotes perfection, to enlighten all that was before it : they have also their seven Angels, seven faithful Messengers, Ministers, or Ambassadors of Christ's Word and Truth, to enlighten every soul that comes with a teachable heart before them. Hence Note.

Obseru. That every church of Christ, as the candlestick of the Tabernacle, *Exod. 25. 37.* ought to have their shining Lamps in them ; that is, Ministers and Teachers that are both godly and faithful ones : Each one of the seven Asian churches had its Angel, its light, its Lamp within its candlestick : and a church without these lights, these Angels, is as a candlestick without its lamp, or light, standing for ornament and fashion sake, but wanting much of its honour, life, light, and service, which those Lamps and lights would yeld unto it ; for Christ hath placed in his church some Apostles, some Evangelists, some Prophets, some Teachers, some Pastors, some Elders, and all for the edifying and compleating of his Body, the church. Churches thus organized with their Angels and Ministers, are most comly : yea that high expression in *Cant. 6. 4.* may be well applyed to such, *Thou art beautiful, O my Love, as Tirza, comly as Jerusalem, terrible as an Army with Banners.* Amidst those seven golden candlesticks that had their Angels or Lamps shining within them, Christ made his glorious appearance in the likencels of the Son of man, *verse 13.* The discoveries of Christ's ways and pretence, both in the way of grace and judgement, are most clearly to be learn'd and discern'd amongst his churches, that have their Angels, Ministers, and Teachers shining most bright in their life and doctrine, in the midst amongst them ; and like to this, was the advice which Christ himself had given to the Spouse in the *Canticles*, chap. 1. 7, 8. when she had lost, or could not find her Beloved : *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth ! where shou feedest ? Where shou makest thy flocks to rest at Noon ?* His answer is, *If thou know not, thou fairest among women ! Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy Kids beside the Shepherds Tents.* Therefore, O thou the beloved of my soul, cause my soul, that by its wandrings have long missed thee, to seek for thee among thy golden candlesticks, in thy Ordinances and holy Assemblies, in the midst whereof thou dost appear, that my soul which languisheth, may be comforted with Apples, and stayed with Flaggons (with spiritual comforts and refreshments) from thy self, who dwellest in the gardens, and feedest thy flocks beside the Shepherds Tents.

Obseru.

Obseru. 2. That Christ's churches are his chiefest Treasuries here on earth of light and truth. It souls desire to come into the true light and truth of God, where should they rather repair, then unto those golden candlesticks, whose proper service is to hold forth light unto all comers ? Christ is found walking in the midst of them, *verse 13.* and therefore where the Sun doth its course, there must needs be light in that Firmament, and much glory : and for this reason in this place, these seven famous Asian churches are represented by the figures of seven golden candlesticks, and also in *Zach. 4. 3, &c.* the ancient church of the Jews is represented by a golden candlestick, with seven Lamps thereon ; and in *Rev. 4.* the two Gospel Witnesses are said to be the two candlesticks, to wit, the two churches of Jews and Gentiles, with their two Olive branches by their side, to wit, the two administrations of Law and Gospel, which are always pouring out their oil for light into the ministerial Lamps of those golden candlesticks : Here must needs be then much light and truth, for these are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth, *Zach. 4. 2. 12 and 14 veres.*

CHAP. II.

Verse 1. Unto the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, write these things, saith he that holdeth the seven Stars in his right hand, wherewithal he keth in the midst of the seven golden Can-

THe general preface to the seven churches, and of the whole Book, being finished in the first chapter, wherein was considered, who was the Author of these divine Revelations, and that was Christ, under divers denominations and similitudes, some appropriable only to the divine nature, some to the humane, clearly notifying, That that person that appeared unto *John*, was *Christ*, or *Christ, God-Man*, who gave these Divine Revelations unto *John*, some immediately by himself, some by his ministering Spirits, the Angels; for though the greatest part of these Prophesies are given and signified by the instrumentality of Angels, yet it may be truly said, that Christ doth it; for it is a known rule, What is done by another at ones Order and command, is done by himself: Christ he is the Author of those Visions, he gives them out to *John*, and *John* he is the recipient instrument, and the subordinate Author, and is commanded to write them, and make them known unto the churches; and in the first place in this second and third chapters, *John* is commanded by Christ, to write those premonitions to the seven churches, which in their order shall be handled: But in the way, before I fall upon the particulars, it will be worth the enquiry,

Ques. Why *John* is commanded particularly to write to each church of the seven apart: *To the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, of the Church of Smyrna, of the Church of Pergamus, &c.*

I answer, for divers reasons: First, They were not guilty of one and the same faults; and as their defections were divers and various, so ought they to have various and divers reprobations: So likewise their graces and endowments were various, so ought they to have divers and various encouragements therein: The more obdurate and high-handed sinners, ought to have the sharpest and highest reprobations and censures, but the more flexible and tender-hearted, ought to be dealt with the more tender hand of love and compassion.

Secondly, The several charges are drawn against each particular church, and so sent unto them by the hand of their own peculiar Angel, Minister, or Pastor, to shew unto us, that they were not to seek for any extrinsical power or authority over themselves: Christ is the common and general admonitor and reprobator of them all; each of them are solely and singly under his comprehensive

reprehensive power and jurisdiction. The Angel of the church of Ephesus hath only received commands and reproofs, that relates to the church of Ephesus; so the Angel of Smyrna, for the church of Smyrna, and the Angel of Pergamus, for the church of Pergamus, &c. The Angel of the church of Ephesus did not receive commands or reproofs, to impose them juridically on the church of Smyrna, nor Smyrna on the church of Pergamus, or on any one of the seven, either singly by it self, or joynly with any of the others, one, two, or more: They were not to be superintendents, or to have a prelatical authority over the rest; there was no cathedral then at Ephesus, nor in any of the other six: the name of Archiepiscopacy and Hierarchycal Supremacy, was then unknown in the little well-ordered Christian world, or rather Common-weal; Bishops then did look no farther with an eye of authority, than over their own flocks; neither then was it known that a combination of some few churches, or rather officers of churches, under the name of classical Elders, provincial Elders, or National Elders, should have the sole power and jurisdiction over the rest of the churches of Christ in their vicinity: Ephesus then as unto outward authority, was Independent, Smyrna then was Independent, and so were all the rest: The churches could then, and also now can act consultatively, by way of advice, by their Elders and Brethren, either joyn or singly, but not juridically, by way of authority, over one and another: The churches of Christ are all Peers, respecting their authority, yet in their graces and perfections amongst themselves differing from one and another in glory: Christ keeps the sole Legislative power in his own hand, and what he communicates thereof unto his churches, it is not that they should be lords over their Sister-churches faith; but that they may within their due bounds, exercise their wholesome admonitions and censures, according to the Word of God: Christ will not suffer one church juridically to censure another sister-church, though corrupt, for there is no such authority given them; Christ keeps that prerogative in his own hand, he reproves and censures the whole seven Asian churches himself, but suffers not one or more to do it over the rest: And one great reason of this is, That if Christ had granted such authority unto one church over others, that that church which becomes most potent, and most countenanced by the secular powers, though most corrupted in doctrine and worship, will undertake to censure the soundest and most orthodox churches of all; as the Arians did of old in the times of the Sons of *Constantine* the great, and their Successors, censure, chastise, and vex even the soundest and most faithful churches of Christ: And the idolatrous apostatized church of Rome, under this pretence of having authority over other churches, do even fulminate out her direst Anathemas on all other churches, though the faithful and undefiled spouses of Christ: Be wise therefore ye true spouses of Christ, hold fast the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free,

free, lest ye subjugate your necks, and precious faith, unto the idolatries of the spiritual harlot: For this very reason Christ gives his particular censures and reproofs to each particular church, according to their peculiar failings and errors, that one more corrupt church might not undertake to censure that which was less corrupt: But if it be demanded how a sound and faithful church of Christ should carry it self towards an erroneous and backslidden corrupted church, I answer, They are to use all means for their recovery, and that in love and charity: First, They are to advise them, and admonish them of the danger of their ways, charitably, not juridically, as a church exercises towards her own members. Secondly, They are to pray for their healing and recovery out of their spiritual Maladies. If all this will not do, to their amendment, they are to withdraw communion from them, and to leave them to their Master, who after he hath proceeded on his white horse, with offers of peace and reconciliation, and they continue obstinate, and not turn by repentance, he can go forth on his red Horse of wrath and fury, and remove his candlestick, his church, and the glory thereof, from amongst them, and leave them desolate. The first that I read of that extended the wings of his authority beyond his own just limits and boundaries, was *Victor*, Bishop of Rome, about the end of the second century, who hotly contended with *Irenaeus*, and others of the African churches, to have a Supremacy over them, and to impose his Dictates on them, and that very pertinaciously, about a frivolous controversy, the observation of Easter. Herein that mysterie of Iniquity did begin to work, which in few after succeeding ages, came to its full stature. To this I shall only add, that all ancient and modern history, both civil and ecclesiastique, do testify, that this Prelacy, and affecting of Supremacy over other churches, whether it be in one single church, person, or many combined ones, hath not only been very dangerous and prejudicial to the faithful churches of Christ, but is, and hath been always the very first born of pride and luxury.

Thirdly, Another reason is, that Christ writes particularly to each of the seven churches, is, to shew, That Christ hath an equal care and respect to all his churches, whiles they continue his, though under foul prevarications and backslidings: Christ hath bowels of compassion towards them, as long as they keep faithful to his name, though otherwise in themselves very faulty; and he is found to be walking in the midst of them providentially, caring for them, holding the seven Stars in his right hand, and teaching them by his Word, if so be he may bring them to repentance.

Lastly, These messages are directed to each particular church, out of Christ's especial tenderness towards them, that they might endeavour to reform their enormities within and amongst themselves, That the churches errors and infirmities may not be told in Gath, nor published abroad to their reproach amongst their enemies,

enemies; whilst there is any hope of the recovery of backsliders, Christ comes with a rod and strokes of a loving and tender hearted father, to cure them, not to shame and reproach them; and therefore Christ directs *John* to write his messages to the Angels of each particular church.

To the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, Write, [What is meant by Angel, I refer to the sixteenth and last verses of the first chapter: But the question is, Whether by Angel of the church of Ephesus, be intended the chief Pastor or Bishop, being as Superintendent, or Archbishop over the rest of the Bishops and Pastors of the church of Ephesus? Or, Whether the Angel of Ephesus were the Metropolitan over the other six Sister churches?]

I answer first to the latter, There is no colour at all for that opinion, for the reasons but in the former page specified; and to add a word, Because Christ commands each Angel to reform their abuses within themselves: He sends not the Angel of one church to reform another, that has no authority over it; the Angel of the church of Ephesus is not sent to Smyrna, nor Smyrna unto Ephesus, nor unto the rest, but an extraordinary Officer, a Prophet, *John*, a man of God is sent unto them all, to tell them of their faults, and to exercise that authority which Christ hath given and deposited in all his Gospel churches; and to each of them in particular, for their dealings and recoveries out of their backslidings. Indeed any one that hath an extraordinary Spirit and call, as *John* had, may exercise that unlimited authority over the churches of Christ, but I know not any in these days, or since the Apostles times, that do pretend unto it, but that great and rampant Roman man of sin, who is the great and only pretender to that Spirit of Infallibility, and yet who more fallible then himself in his judicial sentences, doctrines, and ways of worship? Indeed if he had what he pretends, that Spirit of infallibility justly might he assume authority in censuring, directing, and governing all other churches; but before that does appear, let himself, and others that assumes the like authority with himself, hide their faces in shame and confusion for ever.

Secondly, To the first question I answer, That those I confess of the Episcopal Interests, do hold that the Subscription of the particular church, directed to the Angel of the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, &c. do intend and signify, that they are directed to the chief Pastor or Bishop, that is supreme Overseer, Director, and Mediator, over all the rest of the Bishops and Pastors of the particular churches within Ephesus, Smyrna, &c. As if this had been written to the Angel of the church of England, that is, saith the Episcopals to the Archbishop, who is the chief Prelate and Bishop over all other the Prelates and Bishops in England: Or if it had been directed to the Angel of the church of London, Salisbury, Exeter, &c. that is, say they, to the Bishop of London, Salisbury, or Exeter, &c. who is the chief Bishop, Pastor, and Overseer

seer over all the rest of the Bishops and Pastors within his own Jurisdiction and Diocese.

I answer first, that the words *επίβολος*, and *ποιητής*, which we translate according to the Latine Dialect Bishops and Pastors, or according to our own proper Idiome, Overseers, and Feeders of the Flock are Synonimas, and are but as several denominations of one and the same Office, which do arise from divers acts therein. For the faculty of over-seeing, guidance, and direction, he is called a Bishop; for that of teaching, instructing, and spirituallly feeding his flock in all kinds, he is called a Pastor, and very often too in Scripture for his rootedness and soundnes in faith, life, and doctrine, he is called an Elder; so that these are but several names of one and the same office, and often applyed in Scripture reciprocally to one and the same person; somtimes he is called the Elder of the church, somtimes the Bishop, somtimes the Pastor; to denote unto us, that such as guide well their flocks, and feed them with the green pastures of wholsome doctrines, are most worthy of double honour amongst the Saints; but lest herewith they shoule be elevated above their proper station, they ought to eye another Title too, which is given them in Scripture, they are Ministers, that is, Servants that attend on Christ and his churches; they receive Christ's messages, and commend them unto his churches, and come again with returns of the churches improvements in obedience and thankfulness unto Christ; and for this reason they are here entitled by the name of Angels, Messengers, Ambassadors, or Ministers of Christ; and how these humble Titles of Servitors and Messengers will suit and agree to the Lording stomacks of Metropolitans, and Lord Bishops, or chief Pastors over many churches, it passes my skill to conjecture. There was a time when the good Bishop of Rome did take on him that self-denying Title only of *Servus servorum Christi*, A servant to the servants of Christ; but O now, *Quantum mutatus ab illo!*

Secondly, As some of the Presbyterian interest will have this Inscription, *To the Angel of the Church of Ephesus*, to be meant the Presbytery, or the combined Elders of the church of Ephesus, which is asserted with far less reason then the former; for it is inscribed, *Unto the Angel, not Angels of the church of Ephesus*: neither is it clear that there were more political churches then one in Ephesus, to make up a combination of divers, as the Presbytery will have it; but rather the contrary is evident, for if there were more churches then one in Ephesus, the Inscription would run more rationally thus, *Unto the Angels of the churches of Ephesus, &c.*

But here they will object (as I have found that one of their learned champions, I mean M. Rutherford formerly hath done) That Angel here is to be taken collectively, as that, *The Angel of the Lord shall pitch his Tents about the righteous.*

I grant, Angel in that Scripture ought to be taken collectively, for

for many Angels; but that it should so in this place, is a mere *non sequitur*, yea rather, a foul absurdity will be according to this sense of theirs, farther'd on the Spirit of God in this place: for understand that the Presbyterie, which is a collective and combined body of many Elders of divers churches, which they would have here to be meant by the Angel: All of the Presbyterian judgement do intend thereby the church representative, as *God tell the Church*, that is, say they, the Presbyterie. *Hear the Church*, that is, say they, the Presbyterie. Now that this word Angel will stand with such interpretation, sounds very harshly; for observe what a strange and uncouth sound and sense do these words give, *To the Angel of the church of Ephesus*, that is, to the church of the church of Ephesus, according to their acceptation; for so they call the Presbyterie, the church: I suppose few will find but very little reason in such a sense; yet I grant that in one church there may be many Ministers, so there might be in Ephesus many Teachers, many Elders, many Deacons, for they are all Ministers unto the church of Christ; so also they might have one that had the preheminence over the rest, as the Overseer, Bishop, or Pastor of the flock, whose care and office is not only to rule and guide the flock, but to feed them also, and such a one is worthy of double honour, in respect of the eminency of his ministerial service above the rest, and so might rightly be called the Angel catoxochē, or chief Messenger or Minister of the church of Ephesus, to whom these admonitions were directed; and so I take the word Angel in this place to signify the chief Minister, to wit, the Bishop or Pastor which God had set over the church of Ephesus, to whom the charge is inscribed, and this was *Onesimus*, as *Eusebius* justifies, lib. 3, cap. 35. out of *Ignatius* his Epistle unto the church of Ephesus.

Observe, From this former discouſe note, That the Pastors and chief Ministers of churches, are the fittest instruments to receive and deliver Christs messages and intendments unto his churches. They can do it authoritatively, *ex officio*, by vertue of their call unto that end: Others of private capacity can do it only charitably, *virtute doni*, by vertue of a gift, by way of advice and counsel: The charge here is inscribed to the Angel or Pastor of the church of Ephesus, and it is the rather inscribed and directed to the chief Minister, for sundry reasons: First, That it might have the greater reverence and authority with them to whom it was directed. Secondly, That it might be set home on their hearts with the greater wisdom and vigour; for admonitions or reproofs coming from Pastors, or the chief Ministers of the church, are as nails driven by the masters of Assemblies. Thirdly, That it might be done with the more faithfulness, for they are the Overseers of Christ's flock. Fourthly, That it might be done with the more tenderness and compassion, for they are the Shepherds or Pastors of Christ's flock, to feed and heal them, not to wound or destroy them.

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them. Fifthly and lastly, That it might be done with the greatest experience, for they are the Elders of the church, who are acquainted with all our spiritual maladies, and know their several cures, and are the best Physicians (next and subordinate to Christ) for our souls in the world. O let us therefore give them due honour and reverence, which is most commendable and worthy of a sound christian, to all Christ's true and faithful Ministers and Ambassadors of his Word and Gospel, whom Christ hath honoured with the names of Angels, Bishops, Pastors, Elders, and the like; let us not dishonour, vilifie, or upbraid, with any branding or unworthy Titles whatsoever.

Obser. 2. Unto the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, Write.] Hence Note, That every rightly constituted and well ordered church, ought to have their Angel, Minister, or Pastor over them. Every golden candlestick ought to have their burning Lamps within them, to give light to all that come before them; see more hereon on the last verte of the first chapter. Yet in this I desire to be understood, not as if the Being and form of a church did remain wholly in the Officers thereof, but in the whole Fraternity of Believers, the essential matter thereof primarily and chiefly; so that I here intend the well-being of a church, not the being thereof: and so I affirm, that two, or three, or more gathered together in the name of Christ, to close with him in his Ordinances, though without Ministerial Officers, yet may be for the essential matter termed a faithful church of Christ, but not a political organical one, which hath the highest and greatest glory on it: for I am of opinion, that the first hath the priviledge of the exercise only of some Ordinances within themselves, as Prayer, &c. but the latter hath the more full and ample Gospel patent and commission, even to the administration of the Sacrament, and unto excommunication and highest censures, which cannot rightly be executed out of political churches, which are merely acts of power, office, and authority.

From the words, the church of Ephesus, of Smyrna, of Pergamus, &c. Some hence absurdly reason for a National church: 'Tis true, there was a church at Ephesus, at Smyrna, at Corinth, at Rome; but to argue from hence that all in Rome, all in Corinth, all in Ephesus must be the church, is a very fond reasoning: This were to argue, that *Nero* that bloody heathenish Tyrant, with his whole housshould, not much unlike unto himself in barbarous cruelty, were the church of Christ, because *Paul* writ to the church in *Nero's* house; and though there was the church of Christ in Ephesus, yet I presume, on good grounds, that most or the greatest part of Ephesus cryed up, *Great was Diana of the Ephesians*, and though there were churches of Christ in Rome, Corinth, Smyrna, Pergamus, and other places mentioned in Scripture, yet we know by good history, that the National Worship and Religion was Ethnick, unto *Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, &c.* yet indeed

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I confess, a Church may be called the National church, as that of Ephesus, of England, of France, of Scotland, &c. in respect of the church constituted and made up of members or persons of that Nation; but herein we have no difference; the controverse is not about words, but things really differing among themselves; as when they affirm every individual and singular parochial church of England, to be particular churches of Christ, as parts of the whole, and the whole to be the National church of England, constituted of its singular parts. If all England, Scotland, France, be the church, what room is left for the world, and the profane therein? The church may be denominated of England, Scotland, France, &c. but not all England, Scotland, France to be the church, there is great difference in those expressions, but of this I shall say no farther at present.

Having done with the Inscription or direction, *To the Angel of the Church of Ephesus*, the next thing is, write, for the better observation of the things that follow. *These things, saith he, that holdeth the seven Stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden Candlesticks.*

That the church of Ephesus, and the rest, may know from whom this subsequent message comes, tell them, that it is from him that holdeth and keepeth in his fatherly hand of protection, his faithful Ministers and Pastors, which are as stars in the Firmament of his churches, for glory. Peruse the sixteenth verse of the first chapter more fully to this purpose. *And who walketh, that is, is in active posture, ready to observe all the doings, whether good or evil, of all his churches;* and therefore he is said to walk in the midst of his seven golden candlesticks: Consult more at large with v. 13. & 20. of c. 1. From Christ's posture of walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, or the seven Asian churches, note, That Christ is very intent, with an eye of providential observation, and that for their good, over all his faithful churches.

This is not the time of his sitting on the Throne, of judging the world, but of walking in the midst of his golden candlesticks, viewing the order of his churches, and to see whether they are proficients under the means of grace, according to that of the *Apocalypse* cap. 611. *I went down into the garden of Nau, to see the fruit of the Valley, and to see whether the Vine flourished, and the Pomegranates budded.* Christ is now viewing his churches gratis, taking delight therein, and to encourage them to perseverance, that the crown may be unto them that overcome; and also takes a special notice of their backslidings, and lays them before their eyes, in the deceitfulness thereof, that they may loath them, and return unto their God by a holy repentance. And this is but a confirmation of his promise at his departure, left as his last comforting Legacy with his afflicted church. *Math. 28. 20.* That though he was ascended into the highest heavens, yet in his providential eye over them, and by his Spirit, teaching, directing, counselling,

supporting, and comforting them, he would be ever with them, unto the end of the world.

Verse 2. *I know thy works, and labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not forbear them which are evil, and hast examined them which say they are Apostles, and are not, and hast found them Liars.*

Verse 3. *And hast born, and hast patience, and for my names sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*

In the Greek, *σατανάς*, I have seen thy works, for the better and more perfect taking knowledge of them: Our knowledge is mixt, and joyned with much imperfections, and at best, is but a mixt act of our understanding and affections; and so to know a thing by a human capacity, is to understand it, and the nature thereof, in the highest notion that its capable of comprehension, and often by reason of the darkness in the understanding, the affections or will are misplaced, and so become erroneous and sinful: for a mind not well informed, or an ignorant soul, can very hardly be a good or a godly one, for without this light, the judgement and affections will be often led astray, to that which is only good in appearance, and to contemn that which is in itself, is really good and perfect: but there is no fear of imperfection of knowledge in this person, Christ who is one with the Father, God from everlasting, and therefore all our works are patent and open before him, his judgement or affections cannot be misled, to approve of things and works that should not, or disapprove of works that are worthy to be approved: He is God, and cannot be deceived, on any false pretences, he sees our works as they are in themselves, and in the very nature of them, with all their circumstances: We see and know things by mediums, mixtly, weakly, and imperfectly; He sees and know things simply, absolutely, and most perfectly: the eye in itself cannot want sight, nor the Sun want light, neither can the Creator of all things in this present temporal world, or his church, this spiritual world, be ignorant of any of his or their handy works. Christ sees and knows the works of the church of Ephesus fully, what are approvable, and what are disapprovable in them. *He戒 Note.*

That Christ is a most just and equal censor of his churches works. He forbids to call darkness light, or light darkness; he tells the church of Ephesus, that he knows their works of travail, patience and sufferance for his Name sake, and so places his favourable aspect and complacency thereon, and yet what is evil in them, he cannot bear without a reproof, as tis defection or failure in his first love, and ardent affections, which the church of Ephesus bore to Christ, and his Truths, at their first conversion or entertainment of the Gospel amongst them, ver. 4. Christ also tells the church of Sardis and Laodicea, that he knows their works, but

but in another tone, not of approbation, but of reproof and censure; he said to Sardis, cap. 3. 1. *I know thy works, for thou hast a name that thou livest, but thou art dead; and in verse 15. he falls upon Laodicea, and tells them, I know thy works; that thou art neither cold nor hot, I would thou wert cold or hot: Christ will not palliate, or lay cushions under great ones' elbows, and prophesie smooth things unto them, nor to the churches that bears them; whilst they are most rotten in the root and heart. Had not God a controversy of old with his Israel for this very sin, abundantly witnessed against by God in most of the old Prophets; When as some would stand up and prophetic peace, when there was no peace? as Ezek. 13. 10. 16. *And what have they to do with peace, while their hands are full of blood and iniquity?* I could wish it were not the sin of some of the pretended Angels of the churches in those days, where is that faithful one to be found? It may be one of a thousand, that as a true Angel or Ambassador from Christ, will deal roundly with their sins, and tell Israel of her sins, and Judah of her transgressions. Good Physicians will search the wounds thorowly, the rather for to cure them: It is also Christ's method, to lay open the wounds and sins of his churches, that so he may (like the good Samaritan) pour oyl into them, and heal them, and bring to repentance: Christ's Ministers should follow their master's pattern, deal faithfully, simply, and roundly with the sins of their people, according to Gospel rule in that case provided, and not as many do, speak peace, and words of comfort, (the true portion of spiritual members of Christ) unto professed enemies to Godliness, and the Saints, scoffers and disorders of Christ's ways and ordinances, drunkards, Wearers, &c. What have such to do with the childrens bread, to continuing unrepentant and obstinate? It is much to be feared, for this lukewarmness of many Ministers and churches, it will come to pass, that Christ will spew them out of his mouth, cap. 3. 16. as he did the church of Laodicea, and the church of Israel of old, Mat. 23. 43. I shall only add that of Ezek. 13. 22, 23. to be seriously considered in the close of this point: The Prophet speaking to those that sowed pillows under the Arms-holes, because with lies ye have made the hearts of the righteous sad; Whom I have not made sad, and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not turn from his wicked way, by promising him life: Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine delusions, for I will deliver my people out of your hand; and ye shall know that I am the Lord;*

Obser. 2. Another corollary hence riseth, That all churches and persons ought to have and receive a due acknowledgement of all graces and vertues that they are eminent in, though chargeable with many defections and failings otherwise. Christ spares not to acknowledge, but makes honourable mention of the graces of the churches, in this and the next chapter, though otherwise many aberrations and failings were laid unto their charge; Though the

the church of Ephesus was to be reproved for the coldness in her first love, yet she had these commendable vertues and graces in her, constancy and patience under sufferings for Christ's sake, and hatred to all evil workers, and false lights, and Apostles, that come with doctrines destructive to the great fundamental, or corner stone, the true doctrine of faith in Christ: and so Christ proceeds with the other churches in the like method, and lays a commendable character on them all for those graces in them worthily calling for it. *Paul* could give a just acknowledgement to his brethren the Jews, though otherwise perverse enough, bearing them witness, that *they had a zeal to God, though not according to knowledge*, Rom. 10. 2. And Christ told the Jews, and spoke it with approbation, and to their commendation, *Ye believe in God, believe ye also in me*. It is the great fault of most of professors of these days, of all sort of persuasions, that they will not almost acknowledge him a brother in Christ, or give him the right hand of fellowship, that is not baptized into the same opinions and interest with himself; but this rather favours of a spirit schismatical and factious, then of a meek christianlike peace-making temper, which will bear all things that are indifferent, rather then break the communion and unity of brethren, who have put on one Lord, one Faith, one Baptisme. O! what a lamentable practise it is, for such as are Presbyterians, to rake up all the faults, and dirt they can, and cast it in the faces of Independents! And again, for Independents to cast it back on the Presbyterians; and both of them to cast it in the faces of those called Anabaptists, and they again as ready as the former, to repay it back again: Why? Have you so learned Christ? O! for shame, let all that fear God of each sort, be ashamed of this unchristianlike practise, let it not be told in Gath, nor published in Askelon; but follow the steps of your common Saviour, what you see of God in your brethren, commend it, encourage it, cherish it: Though there may be failings in each sort, and that great ones, yet for that grace and appearance of God in them, love them, honour them, and think better of them then of thy self, though thou mayst be righter in some externals of Worship then they, yet they may be righter then thee in doctrinals; and though thou art sounder then they in doctrinals, yet they may be the more holy, and better men: I speak not this to comply with any corrupt doctrine or worship, but to give every one his due titles of honour, love, and commendation, for their gifts and graces; and for their faults and failings, deal with them in a spirit of love and charity, Gal. 6. 1. for their recovery and repentance, according to Gospel order; for so thou mayest win thy brother: but by the other way, thou art sure to drive him farther from thee. It is observable, that the Familistical Notionists, the Quakers in these days, are highly baptized in this sin, and ouer run all others in this uncharitable and unchristianlike practise: they are sharp censurers of all others, churches, and persons

persons, that will not run in the same fanatique wilde courses with themselves; and which is strange, and most observable, is, that they never will acknowledge, nor give a due commendation to any, though never so self-denying, and godly, and filled abundantly with all the graces of the Spirit, unless they take up the same mad opinions with themselves; and therefore not strange, when they have lost the spirit of love and charity, and in stead thereof, are filled with a spirit of self-fulnes and pride, that they tread under foot the blood of the covenant, as an unholy thing, and so carried on to damnable and blasphemous opinions and heresies. Amongst the many reasons that we ought to give a due acknowledgement to the graces in the godly, these are some.

1. That God may have the due honour, as the author of them.
2. Because all graces are of the same Spirits working, and therefore worthy of honour wheresoever they are found.

3. For the encouragement and cherishing all persons under all hardships and afflictions, in acquiring and maintaining those graces alive, fructifying and effective.

4. And lastly, That their sins may not so discourage the godly, as to think nothing praise worthy in them, whiles they have many things in them worthy to be praised, cherished, and followed, as having the impress of the Spirit on them.

Christ having given his approbation of the sufferings, constancy, and patience of the church of Ephesus for his names sake, and taking notice thereof as their works catechisten, *I know thy works*, that is, I take notice of these your graces, and works of suffering, patience, and zeal against such workers, false Teachers, and false Apostles, and these are your good works, worthy of commendation, and imitation in you: Now in all our actions observe, there must be many circumstantial ingredients to denominate them by the name of good works: according to that old rule,

A Quo, cui, quomodo, quando.

First, They must proceed from a true Fountain: God's Spirit must be the first Mover and Author of them; corrupt Nature can produce nothing higher then it self, Rom. 3. 9, 10. God can look upon none of our duties or works with an eye of complacency, unless they have in the first place his stamp upon them.

Secondly, *Cui*. You must examine to what ends, and to whom, to whose name and glory they are directed; if we sacrifice to our selves, for our own ends and advantages, our sacrifice is in vain, an abomination, and as the cutting off a dogs head, in as much as we do it unto our selves, and not unto the Lord: consider Isa. 1. A good action or work may lose its crown for want of a right end. If we pray, repent, mourn for sin, &c, which are necessary duties, yet if we only respect our selves, and our own ends, to wit, to be freed and delivered only from wrath to come, not having an eye

eye to the sanctifying of God's name thereby, we may lose much of the comfort of those duties, if not the duties themselves become sin unto us; for all must be done unto the glory of his Name.

Thirdly, You must consider the *Quomodo*: In what manner works are to be done, to denominate them good; they must not be done Pharisically, to be seen of men; so they lose their reward. The sufferings and patience of the church of Ephesus, for the name of Christ, were highly commendable graces in them, yet if they should affect them as the popelings do, to attain to themselves the glory and name of Martyrs, they had their rewards: The Familistical Quakers of these days, do most perversly walk in the same steps, highly affecting sufferings, and rushing thereinto, not considering the *Cui*, nor the *Quomodo*, neither to what end they do it, nor the manner how they do it: Indeed persons may suffer justly for their pertinacity and obstinacy against Magistrates, but not for the name of Christ, unless in his providence he calls them to it. Therefore

Fourthly, The *Quando* is also to be considered, the time when they are to be performed. To bestow a beneficence on a rich person, or one that wants it not, it cannot be called an act of charity; for they are able to make retribution for it; but to do it towards Christ's poor afflicted members, when their wants and necessities call for it, then it is truly a good work. Secondly, To draw sufferings on ones self for ones pertinaciousness in opinions not relating as necessities, or fundamentals unto salvation, and so disturbing the peace of Commonwealths in the promotion thereof, this cannot be termed a suffering for Christ's name: But it must be clear and real Truths that justifies a soul in his sufferings for it, that the soul and conscience be kept undefiled thereby, and so become a faithful witness unto Christ, and the Truth, when God calls him to it in clear dispensations of providence. See more hereon in v. 9. of the former chapter.

Fifthly, in the last place understand, That the best and choicest of our works, though they are all rightly circumstantiated, as aforesaid, yet strictly and simply in themselves, according to the rules of Justice, they are not to be called good works; for so, and in that sense, 'God is only good, *Mark* 10. 18, and our best works being mingled with much weakness and imperfection in the production of them, though the agency of God's Spirit is manifestly in them, yet passing through corrupt conduits, and the hands of sinful instruments, they receive a tincture of the vessels and defilement from the sinful Agents that do produce and effect them, and so singly in themselves are sinful and imperfect: But as our persons are accepted in Christ, our works, though otherwise weak, sinful, and imperfect in themselves, being performed in the sincerity of our souls, God accepteth, as good, holy, and perfect, as being done and presented in the name of Christ, and upon that altar,

altar, that both sanctifies the gift and the giver: In vain to seek for an acceptance of our works before our persons be in Christ, then he accepts the will for the deed, and our works, though weak and imperfect in themselves, yet in Christ, and as flowing from his divine efficiency, they are accepted of God, as most holy, good, and perfect.

I shall in the next place consider more especially, what was commendable in the church of Ephesus, which was the labour and patience they under-went for Christ's sake; which did manifestly appear in their zeal against evil doers, and false Apostles, which they could not bear. From hence Note,

Obser. That it is equally burdensome, troublesome, and grievous to Christ's faithful churches, to have evil doers, and false teachers amongst them. The one doth corrupt their manners, the other their judgements; the one is pernicious in their examples, the other in their doctrines; the one destroyeth the life of godliness, the other the truth of God; and where the one is tolerated, the other follows also: for if evil workers are forborn in the churches, their judgements will be soon corrupted, to endeavour to uphold their more corrupt practices: for such as keep not to the commands of God, he gives them over judicially to embrace and follow false Teachers, and to believe lies and vanities. And secondly, When false Teachers are tolerated, quickly follows evil practices: When in the time of the late Bishops, in opposition to the godly, it was asserted, that the Law that required the observation of the Sabbath, was not moral, but only humane and Ecclesiastique; what followed that false teaching, but most profane and wicked practise of carding, bowling, sporting, revelling, drunkenness, and all sort of profaness upon that day? Uprightness in life and doctrine, are the two pillars of a church, and where one fails the other will soon fall to ground after: they are as inseparable twins, the corruption of the one will be the death of the other. It is to be observed, as soon as these primitive churches entertained false Apostles amongst them, we presently hear of the obscene Sect of the Nicholaitans following; the devil will not be contented to corrupt the head only, but the heart also, and if in the first place he corrupts the heart, the evil affections will soon fume into the judgement, and darken the understanding; wherefore a use of caution hence ariseth to Christ's churches; That if they be zealous of God's glory, and their own well-being, that they suffer not peaceably amongst them, either evil doers, or false Teachers, both equally tending, if tolerated, to their destruction and ruine.

Obser. 2. It is often a matter of great trouble and travel for the churches of Christ, to deal with evil doers, and false teachers in the church. When the corrupted part is become a great Interest in the church, how difficult is it for the sound part to meddle with it: Witness the present state of our churches in England, and elsewhere.

where amongst the Nations, desiring Reformation from Anti-christian errors and idolatry ; what a matter of trouble it is, and sometimes of much affliction and sufferings to divers precious and sound christians, when they go about to reprove the false teachers, and evil workers, the great hinderers at present of a thorow Reformation in the Ordinances and Doctrines of Christ : How they fall upon such as the troublers of Israel ! Not considering that their lusts are the principal causes thereof ; and if Christ's witnesses speak against them in faithfulness, they are presently branded as troublers of their peace and factions, and often suffer for it : The church of Ephesus had their portion herein, of travel and patience, for their integrity unto Christ and his Truth, against these teachers and wicked persons in that primitive age, so neer Christ's time, and the pouring forth of the Spirit ; and therefore no marvel if under the falling away, and Antichrist's dominion, Christ's faithful witnesses have a share therein also.

But to proceed, *And thou hast tryed them which say they are Apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.* It seems Ephesus had pseudo-Apostles, or false Apostles, as well as Corinth, and other churches, 2 Cor. 11. 13. who pretended themselves to be true Apostles of Christ ; who under that pretence, came with deceitful, and soul-destroying doctrines ; as, That the Resurrection was past already, That the Mosaical Law was to be joyned to faith in Christ for justification ; That the community of all things and women were lawful, which they called spiritual marriages, which the sect of Nicolaitans held : These were the errors of the false Apostles of the primitive days. Now the Apostles of Christ were extraordinary Officers sent by him ; so the word *Ἄποστολος* signifies, one sent to his service for the publishing the Messias and his doctrine over the whole world, and so were universal Officers, and could act in and over all churches by their Apostolical authority ; but for others to argue from their practise, that are ordinary officers, and of an ordinary spirit, that they may act as they did, is a mere *nón sequitur* : Now the false Apostles would it seems needs arrogate the same authority to themselves, in imposing their dictates upon the churches ; but the church of Ephesus had so much spiritual wisdom as to try and examine them, and so found them false ones, and liars.

Hence note, That it is a most commendable practise and duty in Christ's churches, to make a diligent and narrow inquisition into the truth of all doctrines and teachers that come among them. The church of Ephesus was very famous for this very thing, and an *Euse* given them by Christ for this action : And indeed, how could they, or any other churches, find out the deceitfulness and falsity of those that were false Apostles, and false Teachers, unless they had tryed and examined their doctrines ? Paul accounted the Bergans more noble than others, for this very thing, for the enquiry into the truth of his doctrine, whether things were so or

no as he delivered unto them : for indeed it argues a most stupid kind of disposition, to receive all things that comes from men without enquiry, either into the truth thereof, or at least, the integrity, faithfulness, and the authority of the Relator thereof : for as some truths lie deep, and every common person or member cannot fathom it, yet every one, though never so weak, that cannot satisfie their consciences by their own sight in the entertainment of a truth, yet can in part acquiesce in the ability and fidelity of their Teacher, and so may get much satisfaction unto themselves from the authority of their guides and teachers ; therefore it is a duty incumbent on all First, for the more spiritual and quick-sighted christian, to try all things, and to hold fast what is good. Next, for the weaker christian, to try the faithfulness and integrity of his Teachers, and to hold fast what he commands unto him in things disputable, and not of easie discernment.

Query. But a Question may be moved, who shall try, judge, and examine false Apostles, false Teachers, and their corrupt doctrines ?

I answer, First, every private or particular christian may do it, *Judicio discretionis*, by a judgement of discretion, and of private discerning.

But secondly, to try them *Judicio Authoritativo*, by a judgement of authority, and juridically, it must be done by that whole church wherein they are risen up and maintained ; for in them lies the plenary judicial power and authority of judging all doctrines and teachers, which is usually called the power of the Keys. Neither is this power in the Officers or Eldership of the church, when distinct from the Body, as some would have it, but collectively, in the whole church Officers and Members, though unto the Presbytery, or Officers, I should grant the precedence in many things, yet the Body collective is above the Officers ; for the Officers are ordained more principally for the Body, but not the Body for the Officers : but the head cannot say unto the body, I have no need of thee ; nor the body unto the head, but all joyn together makes up a compleat harmony, and an organical Body ; Officers and Members in a church, make up a compleat christian, or microcosm, or commonwealth, wherein all the Laws of Christ are juridically administered, and who have the full power of trying, censuring, and judging all false Teachers and doctrines that shall rise amongst them : For if the juridical power were solely in the Presbytery, or Officers of the church, then the church of Ephesus would not collectively deserve that Eulogie and approbation for their zeal against false Apostles, but it would rather be attributed to the Angel of the church, or chief Officers or Overseers of the church only ; but here the whole church of Ephesus is praised and approved for their non-toleration of evil persons, and for their trying of, and sifting out the false Apostles ; therefore it argueth very strongly, that the power of censures and trying, is not singly in

in the Officers, but in Officers and members joyntly, as making up one organical Body politique, which is Christ's highest Judicature on earth, to decide and judge of all Doctrines rising in his churches, that will not hold weight according to the shekel of the Sanctuary. A farther instance ye have pregnant to this purpose in the church of Thyatira, in verse 20, following; where the reproof is laid home close on the whole church of Thyatira, for suffering the woman Jezabel, and her prophetique delusions: Now if it were alone in the Angels power of Thyatira to deal with these Balaamitish prophets, the Spirit of Christ would especially lay the burden and reproof upon them, to wit, the Superintendents of the church; but it is clearly notified unto us, that the charge is wholly laid home upon the churches, v. 17. *Let him that hath an ear, hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches:* Though I grant, the Eldership or Officers may be the mouth of Christ unto the churches, and again the churches mouth unto Christ, and so they are his Ambassadors agitating in his name, and are to precede in many duties in relation to the church, yet the charge for admission and entertainment of heterodoxies, and corruptions in the churches, is not solely laid upon them, but upon the whole churches: so hence this is clearly evinced, that those that are justly charged for the admission and permission of evil, had an indubitable power and authority in themselves, either not to admit it, or being admitted, to try it, and cut it off by such means as are appointed for such ends: but the whole church of Thyatira is justly charged for the admission and permission of corruptions among them, therefore the conclusion is evident. But this shall suffice herein. See more hereon, v. 20. following.

Object. But is not this (with the Papists) to raise the jurisdiction of the church so high, as to set it above the sovereignty of the Word?

I answer negatively: for a Sovereign Prince receives no diminution of honour for his subordinate Ministers of State to receive that honour due unto their place; neither so doth the Word lose at all of its glory, for that the church hath its due honour put upon it also: indeed the Word is *suprema Lex*, the Standard, the Rule and light by which all doctrines are tryed and discerned, and being of Divine Revelation, and in its self infallib'e, must needs be above the authority, and of a surer testimony then that which is mixed with much fallibility and imperfection, as the choicest and purest churches ever were, as those of Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, &c. And as a Law of meer humane institution is reputed of so high authority, that it binds the Legislators themselves, and in that respect is above those that made it; but much more the Word of God, which is his Law, and his revealed mind, coming from so infinite and unerrable a Legislator as God is, so far transcends the authority of any Judicature on earth, as the wisdom of an infinite does a finite creature, therefore must needs be binding to all to whom

whom it is made known, having such a perfection in it, that who-soever is conversant therein, it is able, by the blessing of the Spirit, to make him wise unto salvation, and perfect in every good thing and work. The Word unto the Church, is as the Sun unto the Dial; if the Dial be set right to the Sun, it will give a right judgment of the time of the day; so if the church gives a judgement according to the square and scantling of the Word, it will be a righteous judgement; but otherwise, to make the Word subservient, and to conclude unto the churches dictates is an undertaking to rectify the course of the Sun unto the obliquity of the Dial, which will prove *Aethiopiam levare*, and most irrational. So that church that keeps her self within her own sphere, and tries and examines spirits and doctrines that are heterodox and unsound, by the sound of the Word, which is a most sure light, and infallible cynosure, doubtless that church will be led and preserved in all truth: But if any one so far exalts its self, as to conclude for truth its own dictates, dissentaneous unto the Word, but suiting with self-interest and designe; the first may be a golden candlestick, both precious and famous for its faith, integrity, and justice towards God and man; but the latter will soon degenerate into an harlot-church, if not soon become apostate to the faith. The first is Christ's highest Judicature on earth, wherein he takes delight to walk in, as his Garden enclosed, to view their pleasant fruits, but the other Christ will look upon as a rotten Tree, that cumbers the ground, and serves only to be hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Obser. 4. Another Observation is, That in the purest times and churches, there are found great corruptions, both in manners and doctrines. In this famous church of Ephesus, Corinth, &c. in the Apostles days, were found both *Pauli* and *Judas*, evil ones, and false ones; such as pretended they were Apostles, but were found liars and deceivers. Amongst the twelve there was a Judas. In that church in the Ark, when the world and church had one and the same extent and boundaries, in eight persons only, yet one was a *Cham*; and there was also a *Cain* when it was of a lesser number, and but four in the world.

But here obiter, and by the way, we must be careful to distinguish between God's Decretive will, and his Preceptive Will. His *Voluntas bene placiti*, and *Voluntas signi*, as the Schools call it. or his will of purpose, and his will of good pleasure: Not that there are two Wills in God, but several and divers acts of one and the same Will; as by the same will we love, by the same will we hate; by the same will we purpose one thing, by the same will we command another thing; yet they are not two contradictory wills, but divers acts of one and the same will. *Diversa non sunt contraria.* Now though God may in his providential wisdom ordain false teachers, and wicked persons to be found in his church for divers ends known unto God, and more especially for the tryal of

of the faithful, and the exaltation of his grace, yet they are much mistaken that hence argue either for admission of wicked persons, or unsound in the faith, into the fellowship of the church, or for their toleration therein after a discovery; for it is the command of God to the contrary, That we admit not such, being known, into the consorts of the church; or being admitted, upon discovery we tolerate them not: for if they were to be admitted and tolerated quietly within the church, then doubtless the church of Ephesus had not received that encomium, and well done for their zeal against them: nor the church of Thyatira that worthy reproof, or the suffering that woman Jezebel amongst them: therefore the one church did her duty, and obeyed Christ's preceptive will, and had the praise and glory for it; the other neglected it, and therefore had a just check laid upon her: So that this question is to be stated *de Jure, non de Facto*: I confess, *de facto*, there may be evil persons, false teachers in the best churches, and purest times, but *de jure*, it ought not to be so; for that which seems and tends to the destruction of a church, should in no wise be admitted; but the admission and toleration of such wicked persons, tends to that end. The illation is very clear from the nature of wickedness, which is of a destroying nature to all entertainers of it; witness those seven famous Asian churches, and many other Eastern churches, who for their iniquities and transgressions from the rule and faith of Christ, are in stead of pleasant Gardens, wherein the Lord delighted in, spewed out, and become the habitation of Dragons, and receptacles of all unclean spirits. Therefore it is unsound to argue from acts of God's providence, to his will: The act of *Judas* in betraying Christ, was never the less abominated in the sight of God, because he had pre-ordained it in his eternal decrees: We must be sure to do no evil (against all which God hath declared his displeasure from heaven) on pretence that the Divine wisdom can order it to good, and draw praise unto it self out of the wrath of man. It is a sure maxime and rule unto us, to act by the rule of God's commands which are patent, not of his providential actings and decrees, whose meaning unto us are unrevealed, and secret.

Object. But some here comes with a replication, and object, and say, That they grant, that manifest, scandalous, and wicked persons, and erroneous, are not to be admitted and tolerated in the church; but withal add, and answer by another question, that it cannot be defended or made good, that none ought to be admitted or tolerated in the church, but such as are true and real Saints; for so they say, we make the church of God of no larger extent then the Elect themselves. I have met somewhat to the same purpose, in the writings of a Learned Gentleman, Mr *W. Morice* of Devon, in his *New Inclosures broken down*, page 110. who says, That he undertakes not to be an Advocate for persons notoriously wicked and scandalous, not asserting that those which are

are notorious for sins, may not be rejected, but that without tried and approved notes of sanctity, they may be admitted: nor that men, whose flagitiousness is publickly known, may be repelled, but none upon any private notion of their faults may be excluded: and thus much will be inevitably concluded from the example of *Judas* his admission, which was the *Diana* contended for, or rather, to use his own words, *Hos quæsum munus in usus*. And in page 61. he asserts, We do only here argue, that Sacraments, formally as such, are not proper privileges of real Saints, or absolutely incommunicable to any but such as have given satisfaction of their holiness, which is their hypothesis, against which we are disputing. Thus far he.

For answer, I could refer M. *Morice* to another learned man of these times, if he would account it as good payment to be referred to another, and an able paymaster without exception, even learned M. *Baxter*, the great anti-Separatist, and anti-Anabaptist of these days, who hath sufficiently, and with Achillean arguments made good that Thesis against M. *Blakes* dogmatical faith, That it is a true justifying faith that entitles to Baptisme, and so consequently, to other Ordinances of the church; And also against M. *Bedford*, his Baptismal Regeneration, who hath strongly convinced in that dispute against him, That Baptisme doth not convey the first grace, but that the first grace was necessarily pre-required before Baptisme: And though hereby M. *Baxter* hath unavoidably armed his adversaries the anti-Paidobaptists, who takes up, as the Lancastrians did of old to the Yorkists in the Battel of *Towton*, the same arrows which came from their enemies quivers, and send them back again, to their greater prejudice; and so may the anti-Paidobaptists form very sharp weapons out of M. *Baxter*'s own Forge, though justly and rightly by him fabricated and aimed to another end: Neither can I see how it will serve M. *Baxter*'s turn, nor how he secures himself against the reverberation and brandishments of their fetorted weapons, when he flies to his common *Asylum* and subterfuge, which is indeed his *Clype Septemplex*, or his surest bower, when they charge upon him arguments drawn from his own pen.

Sic propriis pennis, leditur ipse suis.

Or,

— *Propriis configitur alis.*

*A mounting Eagles plume fix'd on a Dart
Rapt from her Wing, it causeth her own smart.*

And though to them he answers, (when they collect and object from his own positions, that there must be justifying faith, and the first Grace, as pre-requisites in persons coming to Baptisme) that that must be found either in the party himself; or, in the case of Infants,

Infants, in their parents for them ; but where that supererrogating grant is made to the parents faith, I am yet to seek to make good the rights of Infants unto Baptisme, and I believe it will be produced *ad Calendas Graecas* : But how far purity of reason, and analogie between the old legal administrations, and the new Gospel institutions bind and oblige us, I shall briefly enquire into ; and shall here take leave to digress so far, as to leave one word on record for hesitating and scrupulating consciences in this particular. Whether it is safer to practise ordinances in that way, which by all hands and parties is accounted clear and obvious in their several positive institutions, or in that way which is confessed to yield most dark and difficult controversie to find it out, as that about Infant Baptism, is, as M. *Baxter* himself most ingeniously confesseth, page 301. of his *Plain Scripture proof*, &c. and in the beginning of that book more at large, to page 9. And as it is to be observed that if it had been lawful in Institutions that relate to Worship (as the Sacraments are, which in themselves are not naturally moral Ordinances, but depend wholly for vertue on the authority of the Institution) to set them on the Rack, in all the circumstantials of their administrations, as for manner, subjects, and form thereof, to answer all Allusions, Types, and Analogies that may be drawn from the old Testament, we know not, wherein they will make a stop ; unless, as in the old Law there was one visible National church of the Jews, which had a high Priest over them, so by way of Analogie and resemblance, the divisible parts of the Catholique church become united in one, under one *Pontifex maximus*, or, in plain English, his Holines of Rome : So dangerous it is to adhere to Analogies and proportions, of reasoning from the obsolete Legal administrations, which are no ways cogent or constringent to be exemplary, either in matter, form, or subjects of Gospel Ordinances, which wholly depends upon the Will of the Instituter, who is faithful in his house, as was *Moses*. And that is but a slender argument or Scar-crow of some, to raise an odium against their adversaries, when they cry out with a full mouth, this is to cast off the whole Law, and old Testament, at one stroke, whereas we generally grant, that the Law which is moral, natural, is both divine, spiritual, our duty, and perpetual, there is no relaxation to the least iota of it.

Secondly, We grant the Judicial Law of *Moses* to be very useful in many particulars for the use and imitation of the church under the Golpel ; but for the ceremonial part of that Law, it is quite dead unto us, and is part of that hand-writing of Ordinances, which is nailed unto Christ's cross, and to give a restauration and resurrection unto it, either in its self, or in allusions drawn from it, pressed home upon the conscience, is to add Circumcision unto the Gospel, and in effect, to lay a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, which we nor our fathers were ever able to bear, and so by consequence, to make Christ of none effect : For if the Ceremonial

Ceremonial Law, and the Judaical Judicial Law, as particularly relating to that Nation, be void, and non-obliging unto christians under the Gospel, as all sound Protestants confess, and is this day made good and avowed by their general practise ; for what sort of christians do strictly bind themselves up to the Judicials of *Moses*, but do pick and chuse as they please ? For as I said but now, many good things are in them, both useful and imitable for Christian Commonweals to adhere to, but to make them of absolute necessity, as cogent upon the conscience, I know no sound church or teachers does so undertake to become its Advocate ; and if any should be so heterodox, I am resolved, and should give it as advice to others, to hold fast that liberty wherein Christ hath made us free. And if the Judicial Law, together with all its Ceremonials, as all sound Divines grant, and confess, and practise accordingly, be null, and void, and non-constringent unto christians, then how unequal and unjust it is to make it a foundation or corner stone to build any Gospel ordinance thereon ! For the Basis being unsound and sandy, the structure cannot hold, but must needs fall to the ground together : and all such conclusions as are extracted from such unsound premisses, are rather exotique then concentrique with the Word of truth : For what have we to do with Legal Types and Shaddows, which are long since putrid in their graves ? And we may say of them, as *Mary* said to Christ concerning her brother *Lazarus*, *Lord, by this it stinketh*. We have the Anti-type, Christ himself, the true substance of all Judaical Types and Shaddows, who is the sole Lord of his house, and Head of his church, who of common elements of Water, Bread, and Wine, by virtue of his Institution, hath made them unto us Spiritual water of Regeneration, and Spiritual symbols of his Flesh and Blood, which are mystically and Sacramentally communicated to every worthy receiver ; and this Lord, as a faithful Legislator, hath declared his will about those Ordinances, about the manner of the administrations, together with the subjects thereof ; and though some assert that the truth hereabout lies deep, and of difficult discerning, and I believe it true, as unto them and those, by reason of the great dust they themselves raise about it, as the Fox in the Fable, that went to sweep the house with his tail, who in stead of cleansing the house, made it more filthy, by the dust he raised about it ; but for my part, I conceive these two great Gospel ordinances to be plain and clear, to plain and simple hearted christians, in all the necessary circumstantials thereof ; as about the manner of their administrations, the qualification of the subjects, &c. for these Ordinances were not instituted alone for philosophical christians, but were also subjected to the cognizance, and for the edification of all sorts of christians that were not Academics ; and therefore their signification obvious unto all, in all such particulars that makes but a reasonable enquiry thereunto : and therefore I should judge such as Sophisters and vain Janglers, as

as go about to darken the truth of those two great Gospel lights, or Sacraments, by analogical arguments, levied from the Judicials or Ceremonials of *Moses*, to support them withal, or to evidence their truth either in themselves, or in any circumstantial thereof; whereas they are sufficiently supported and virtuated by a clear light in themselves, to wit, their own genuine Institutions: And here rightly may be applyed that of the Poet,

— *Ne te quesiweris extra* —
And for him that is otherwise minded,
— *Credat Judeus Apella,*
Non ego, —

But to return to M. *Morice*, from whose answer I have somewhat digressed, I shall take leave to present him with few arguments out of that learned M. *Baxter*, being my self very conscious to be

— *Impar congressus Achilli.*

In his book for Infant Baptism, against M. *Bedford*, p. 299, this argument of his offers it self. If both in the Institution, and every example of Baptism through all the Bible, the first grace be prerequisite as a condition, then the Ordinance was not instituted for the confirming of that first grace, but in the Institution, and every example of Baptism through all the Bible, the first grace is prerequisite as a condition: Therefore the Ordinance was not instituted to confer it.

By the first Grace (it is his own words) I still mean that Grace which consisteth in a real change of the soul, whether habitual or actual, or if you will call it seminal or radical, you may: By prerequisite as a condition, I mean either in the party, or another for him.

The force of the consequence is evident in that, otherwise Baptism should be instituted to give men that which is pre-required in them, and so which they have already, as to all them that are capable of it.

The Antecedent is undeniable, as might be manifested by a recital of the particular Texts, could we stay so long upon it. *John* required a profession of repentance in those he baptized: Jesus first made them Disciples, and then by his Apostles baptized them, *John* 4. 1. The solemn Institution of it, as a standing Ordinance to the Church, which tells us fully the end is in *Math. 28. 19, 20.* *Go and Disciple me all Nations, Baptizing them &c.* Now for the aged, a Disciple and a Believer are all one, *Mark 16. 16.* *He that believest, and is baptized, shall be saved.* *Acts 2. 38.* *Repent, and be baptized every one &c. 4.* *They that gladly received the Word, were baptized.* *Acts 8. 12, 13.* *The Samaritans believed, and were baptized, both men and women.* *Simon himself believed, and was baptized.*

baptized, *Acts 8. 36, 37.* *If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest be baptized.* And he answered, I believe &c. *Acts 9.* Paul believed upon *Ananias* instruction, and then was baptized. *Acts 10. 47, 48.* and *16. 15. 33.* and *18. 8.* and *19. 4, 5, &c.* Thus far M. *Baxter* in this place. And to see his clearness herein, is admirable, and what advantage a learned man hath, when he hath Truth on his side: Which argument is able (though by him managed there to another end) to overturn all its opposites, that asserts, That true real Grace, or as he calls it, a real change of the soul, is not pre-requisite as the condition unto Baptism.

Amongst many other arguments of his against M. *Blake's* dogmatical faith, I shall only make use of his fourth, and fifth, and eleventh arguments page 96, of his *Apologie*, and refer the Reader to that place for farther satisfaction, where there are many more arguments, both from Authority and Scriptures, levied to this purpose, and comporting with this Truth. His fourth Argument is,

They that are to renounce the World, Flesh, and Divel, are to be true Believers to Justification; but they that are to be baptized, are then to renounce the World, Flesh, and Divel; therefore this abrenunciation hath been practised alwaies in Baptisme since the Apostles times, as Antiquity testifies.

His fifth argument is, They that are required to believe sincerely, in the Father, Son, and holy Ghost, are required to believe to Justification; But such are all as come to Baptism, Therefore. For the *major*, it requires no more proof, but to explain what it is to believe in the Father, Son, and holy Ghost; and our Divines against the Papists have enough proved, that the phrase of believing in, comprehendeth the act of the will, as well as the understanding. To believe in God; is to take him for our God; which is to take him for our sovereign Ruler, and chief good, This none but a sound believer can truly do.

His eleventh argument. If Baptism be solemnizing of the mystical marriage between Christ and the Baptized, then true justifying faith is of God required thereto: But the Antecedent is true: Therefore. Therefore it is said, that we are baptized into Christ, and into one body: and the church hath ever held the Antecedent to be true: The consequence is evident, in that no man but the sound believer can truly take Christ as a husband and head; for so to do is justifying faith

These three have I only chosen of M. *Baxter's* 26. arguments, to set, as an Antithesis unto M. *Morice's* positions, and as an answer thereunto; and if I may speak *pace tanti viri*, an ill case is much disadvantageous to the most learned man; and in this that I have set M. *Baxter* to answer M. *Morice*, is, but to set *Socrates* to answer *Plato*: And I may add one word, that whereas it is objected, That *Judas* and *Simon Magus* faith, which was only dogmatical and formal, though rotten in the root, gives right of admission.

on. I answer, First, It may be granted, *in foro Ecclesie*; for that may be said to give admission to Baptism, &c. which so qualifieth the person, as the church is bound to admit him, as being one that seemeth sound in believing; for *Judas* was always reckoned among the twelve, before his traiterous betraying act of his Lord and Master: and *Simon* is said to have believed also, *Act. 8. 13*. Now the church can but give a judgement of charity, and not knowing any thing to the contrary, cannot deny admission either to *Simon*, or any other that desires it; for charity thinketh no evil, and hopeth the best of all: and it is an old rule, *de occulis non judicat Ecclesia*. But secondly, This is not an entituling, and having right, *coram Deo, & a fædere*, for that alone is saving faith, which God in his covenant makes the condition pre-requisite to such a right of admission, which is before asserted and proved, and that that gives right *coram Deo*, gives a true title also *in foro Ecclesie*; for according to a charitable judgement, they are bound to judge, that the profession of faith, and wills of such as desire admission, are both true, real, and sanctified, or else they would not desire it, though oftentimes the sequel manifests that they are deceived therein: and hereby it is clearly evinced, that the church door is wider then the door of heaven; and that the number of the church militant, does exceed the triumphant, and is far enlarged beyond the limits of the Elect. And herein this shall suffice.

Observe. 5. That false Teachers are most arrogant, and pretend highest to gifts and mission.

The church of Ephesus found it so in their false Teachers, and Corinth also, *2 Cor. 13. 11*. who transformed themselves into the Apostles of Christ, and who by their own mouths said they were Apostles; they would needs get the honour of men of extraordinary spirits and callings, as the Apostles were, yet on tryal, they were found liars: they are of *Dioresphæs*-like spirit, that would needs have the precedence, and be above *John* himself, and the true Apostles: *Gaudent preesse non ut profunt, sed quia grande aliquid putant preesse, & insolentius, & arroganterius principes in Ecclesia locum appetitivis*. They are like those in *Jer. 8. 8*. who say, *We are wise, and the Law of the Lord is with us, while their hearts are full of lies and vanity*: and as those in *Ezek. 13. 6*. who saying, *The Lord saith, yet have seen nothing but a vain vision, and a lying divination*. But I should here demand, why should those false teachers denominate themselves to be Apostles, seeing the number is only limited to twelve?

I answer, Some of the ancient Fathers did denominate the first second, and third century after Christ, the Apostolical times, though the Twelve were dead, for the purity of their doctrine, and being so near the fountain, as Church history manifests: And our Bishop *Jewel* offers to joyn Issue with the Papists, so far as the fifth century, upon the authority of the Fathers, as holding the Apostolical doctrine.

Secondly,

Secondly, I answer, This Apostolical office was not so much the peculiar faculty of the Twelve, as to debar all others from that denomination; and though I grant they were Christ's Apostles catexochen, yet that does not hinder, but others that are sent, for so much the word signifies in the Greek, in Christ's Embassies unto the world, may appropriate that Title unto themselves, as *Paul* very often in his Epistles hath justly vindicated his right unto it; and I know not why might not *Barnabas*, with others that were sent upon the same message with *Paul*, and the rest, appropriate the same Title, and that justly, to themselves also; for I am of opinion, that those are standing perpetual officers in the church, which are described in *Eph. 4. 11*. and are to continue it from one age to another, until the whole body of Christ mystical, the elect are gathered and compleat, for so the words strongly enforce: and *he gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*; till we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Now whereas they object that are contrary minded, That some Offices in the church were only temporary, and for that age and season wherein the Gospel was first promulgated and planted, and for this purpose do urge that other text of *Paul* in *1 Cor. 12. 28*. *And God hath ordained some in his Church, as first Apostles, secondly Prophets, thirly Teachers, then them that do miracles, after that, the gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversity of tongues*: and therefore hence do argue, That because some officers that are here numbered up, are but temporary, and for that first age, as the gifts of miracles, healing, &c. Therefore the Apostolical gift and function is ceased also with them; which was, as they say, for the first planting of the church, not for its growth and continuance.

To which I answer, first, By distinguishing between times and persons: and grant that Officers since Christ's time, have not that measure of Unction, and Spirit of infallibility, as the first Apostles had, yet withal assert, that for all what the contrary minded say, is but *petitio principii*, for they only affirm, that the Apostolical office was but temporary for the first age, but prove it not; and though they rank it up amongst some of the primitive Gifts and Offices that are interred, yet to persuade the ingenious, they should inform where in the Temple (I mean God's Word) is their grave to be found? They may from this last Scripture as justly argue, that the gifts and functions of Teachers, Prophets, Helps, and Governments, are also ceased in the church, because the gifts of healing, miracles, &c. are ceased, in and amongst which catalogue they are also ranked.

Secondly, This Tenant of the Opponents is the ready way, and I presume, had a great influence of late in hatching and cherishing

rishing the sect of the Seekers, and anti-Scripturists: for when it is asserted and maintained by the reputed Orthodox, that most of the primitive offices, as Apostles, gifts of Miracles, Healings, &c. are ceased to the church, under the defection and falling away by the rise of antichrist: They forthwith rejoyn and object; Why? If some gifts are evacuated in the church, and no vertue in them, as you confess, why not the rest of the same foundation and catalogue, as well as they? and so upon the same grounds that some are ceased, they pertinaciously affirm, that all other offices and ordinances are null and defunct also, being only for that age and ministration; and to that end, do interpret that promise of Christ's spiritual support and presence with his Church, in the last of *Matthew*, That he would be with them, *τως τὰς εὐθεατὰς τὸν αἰώνα*, which we render, to the end of the world, or all generations: yet they for their own interest, render, to the end of that age; and so consequently, deny the Word, and Ordinances, and the Being of a church: for how should there be a church, without VVord and Ordinances? and how should the VVord and Ordinances be administered without Officers? according to that of *Rom. 10*. *How shall they believe unless they hear? And how shall they hear without a Preacher? And how shall they preach, unless they be sent?* This hath been the sad consequence of asserting that relaxation of some Offices and gifts in the church, and not evidencing where their graves lie, or their repeals.

Thirdly, I answer, That *Eph. 4. 11, 12, &c.* is strongly convincing for the contrary; for all those offices that are there recounted, which Christ gave unto the church, there is not the least intimation that some were for the church then in being, of that present age, and the rest for futurity to continue; but rather the contrary is evinced: *And he gave some Apostles, &c. Cui bono?* To what end? For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, &c. Now I would anti-query, Are the Saints all perfect? Is the work of the Ministry at an end? Is the church, the body of Christ, so sufficiently edified and confirmed, that they are all come to the unity of faith, and to perfect knowledge, and to a full measure and stature of Christ? I hope none will affirm it, unless the Perfectists, and Quakers.

But here again they will say, VVe grant ordinary Officers, as Pastors, Teachers, Elders, &c. are still continued in the church for this work, until we all come to be a perfect man in Christ; but extraordinary officers, as Apostles, &c. are ceased.

I answer again, This is asserted, and not proved, therefore it is a begging of the question.

Secondly, I affirm, That those which are called the standing ordinary officers, as Pastors, Teachers, Elders, &c. were in their first institution of an extraordinary Spirit, and of the same Union, though differing in measure with the Apostles themselves, and sometimes.

sometimes Apostles, Pastors, and Elders, were taken as Synonima's, though really differing amongst themselves in gifts and offices; as to instance, *James* the first Pastor or Bishop of Jerusalem, was also a pillar and an Apostle. *John*, the great and beloved Apostle, is in his Epistle called the Elder. And in that great Synodical assembly, *Acts 15*. the Elders are in joyned commission with the Apostles; and being men of an extraordinary spirit also, as appears by all those of the first unction, as *Stephen, Ananias, Barnabas, &c.* and the rest of the brethren who went abroad upon the persecution of the church, and preached, and wrought miracles every where, *Acts 8*.

Object. But here some may say, this is to level all officers, and to make the Apostles themselves but of equal authority with the ordinary offices of Pastors, Teachers, Elders, &c.

I answer, Not at all; for though I grant some purity in their gifts, being both extraordinary in their first unction, yet the first twelve, in some acts of their offices, were to excel all others, as is evident by *Acts 1. 22*. when the eleven chose *Matthias* into *Judas* Bishoprick; *Peter* urged that one must be ordained to be a witness with them of the Resurrection, that was conversant with them from the baptisme of *John*, to the time of Christ's resurrection: as this was a great part of their office, to bear witness of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ unto the world; and this they could attest as truth, as eye witnesses, being with Jesus all the time he went in and out amongst them; and herein they surpassed all others that came after. Secondly, They excel all other officers, in that they had their commission immediately from Christ, to convert, disciple, and baptize all Nations into the faith; but all other officers had it derivatively from them. Thirdly, They had the pre-eminence in gifts, of miracles, which was most frequently adjoined to their Ministry for the confirmation of their Doctrine. But it is very inconsequent that the whole Apostolique office is quite ceased to the church, because some of the most eminent gifts and endowments of that office, as it was in the Apostles of the first institution, are ceased, which only indeed was temporary, and necessary alone for the first plantation of the Christian faith; it will as well follow, that Pastors, Teachers, and Elders, are defunct, because some of their first primitive and extraordinary gifts are ceased also.

But secondly, I am of opinion, that what is necessarily essential to denominate an Apostle, did not consist solely in being eye-witnesses of Christ's, life, death, and resurrection, or of power of miracles; for others of the Disciples might be partakers in those gifts, and were so equally with themselves, and yet no Apostles; and *Paul* that wanted much of the accomodation of witnessing unto the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, though supplied by a miraculous sight from heaven, none can deny but was the great Apostle, and light unto the Gentiles.

Lastly,

Lastly, In the affirmative, I assert the true essentials of an Apostle, does consist in his Call and Commission to that work and function: Christ calls the first twelve, *Math. 10. 1. 5.* which were only denominated Disciples, and from their mission unto the lost sheep of Israel, they were then first baptized into the name of Apostles, and so having taken their names from their office, as men sent, it soon became their proper appellations. Now (I say) it is a right mission and commission, that gives a being and essentially unto an Apostle: (Christ, he was the first author that commissionned unto this office; in that of *Math. 10.* his commission was more strict, and of narrower jurisdiction; but in *Math. 28. 19.* it was much enlarged; for in the first, they were only to go to the lost sheep of Israel, and not in the way of the Gentiles: but in the second, they were commanded to go and Disciple all Nations, and to preach the Gospel to every creature. Now as they were sent on this great Embassie for Christ, and by Christ; so they send others to go on with the same work: *Mathias* was the first we read of, *Acts 1.* that they chose into the place of *Judas*: After that, *Paul*, and *Barnabas* *Acte 13. 2, 3.* were chosen, and separated unto this work, and sent unto the Gentiles; and so might be truly called the Apostles of the Gentiles: They again, with the rest of the Apostles in their several Provinces, went about gathering and constituting churches, and ordaining Elders, and officers in every church; and those political churches made up of Officers and Elders, and Members, were the true Delegates of the Apostles, and the center of all just power and authority; and they again from this delegated power, commissionates others, and sends them forth as the Apostles of Christ, by virtue of that power committed unto them, to disciple the Gentiles, and unconverted Nations abroad in the world; for this was the then practise, unless we affirm, that all churches were planted, and all Nations converted by the Apostles themselves in their days, that we read of in history, were afterward converted to the faith, and became famous churches. The Apostles were men but of one generation, and to ascribe to them that work, were to make them eternal. Though their Doctrine continue, yet their persons are translated, and gone to their Fathers; and this propagation of the faith, and work of conversion must be carried on from generation to generation, till all the Elect be called in, and we all come to a perfect man, and unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, and this must necessarily be done by Apostolical men and officers: For I would have the ingenious to consider, that the offices of Elders, Pastors, Teachers, Helps, and Governments, are but relative Functions, and have their being only dependant and limited to their relations and churches: they are neither Elders, Pastors, nor Governments without their own churches, therefore it is very necessary that there must be other officers, universally commissionated to preach the Gospel to the unconverted Gentiles: and these

these are properly called Apostles of Christ, authorized by the church of Christ unto this service. *Joseph of Arimethea*, as antiquity testifies, was our English Apostle, which was sent by the church unto our Nations conversion. *Dionisius Areopagita* was the Apostle unto *France*. *James unto Spain*. *Anthony unto Italy*. *Thomas unto Italy*, and so others unto other Nations: And when christianity was almost lost and obliterated here in *England*, by the incursions of barbarous Nations, *Gregory*, the Bishop of *Rome*, not yet Antichristianized, some centuries of years after, sent here *Austin* as an Apostle, and a Restorer of their almost lost faith, and christian profession. So likewise when our churches send men to convert the Gentile Nations of *America*, and elsewhere, as private Disciples they cannot go; for how can they preach, unless they be sent? as Officers, to wit, as Pastors, Elders, Teachers, or Governments they cannot; for they are relations only to their own churches: therefore they must go as Apostles, which is only suitable to so general and universal work.

And if it be objected, That if the Apostolical offices must continue, as necessary to do the full work of Christ and his church, why not the gifts of healings, miracles, tongues &c.

I answer, There is no necessity for it; for they were only added because of unbelief, and to confirm the truth of that doctrine which was first delivered unto the Saints.

Secondly, I am not sensible what great inconveniences will follow upon it, if it were admitted, that such gifts of miracles, healings, &c. are still continued by Christ unto his church, though not so clear and ordinary as in the first churches. I have read of *Tertullian*, and after him *Cyprian*, about the second century, who provokes their adversaries to the tryal of the truth of their profession by miracles, by bringing persons possessed with devils into their assemblies; which if they should not be effected, and made to confess themselves to be devils, and Christ to be the Son of God, then they were content to suffer.

M. *Baxter* gives us a farther account out of *Athanasius*, *Austin*, and many of the Fathers, that there was a continuation of miracles in their days, and attested to by so many, and honest witnesses, that they were credible to reason, page 63. upon that question, in his book of Infidelity: and in that part of the book of the sin against the holy Ghost, page 15. speaking of casting out devils. Of which sort (saith he) some think that really they did so by the power of God, as we may do now by fasting and prayer sometimes: To this purpose, consider what the prayers and appeals of God's people have strangely and miraculously perfected and produced at the hands of God, of late, and within our memories, in divers examples, which is now too long to rehearse: Some have been restored to health, and miraculously recovered, when there was no hope: others dispossessed of evil spirits, that had palpably vexed and possessed them, and that only by the prayers of faith of some

som godly persons. I shall only give one instance; I heard it related by a faithful messenger of Christ, in a publick Sermon in the City of Exeter, to wit, M. Lewis Steukley, a workman that need not be ashamed, who occasionally in that discourse, spoke of a great man's Steward in Scotland really possessed with the Devil, who was tormented so sore many days, that his tongue was swollen without his mouth, to that magnitude and extensiveness, that it was impossible for him to bring it in, or contain it within his mouth, and so thereby was utterly deprived of all use of speech; yet however in that horrid posture, and speechless, there was a clear distinct voice heard within him, saying unto that Minister that Minister that came to visit the possessed party, being his neighbour, That he might save his pain, for that the person possessed was his own: To whom the Minister answered, I cannot believe thee Satan, for thou hast been a lyar from the beginning. Then the spirit or voice within would answer again, Be gone, for he is mine: To whom the Minister replied, If Christ died for him, thou hast no interest in him, and I will try with my God by prayer, to prove thee a lyar, Satan: Whereupon he departed, and left the party miserably extorted and tormented: and as he was in his way returning to his house, it was in his thoughts to pitch upon some certain faithful christians to joyn with him, and assist him in this duty to God, on the behalf of the possessed party, and to send for them as soon as he returned: But observe the providence, when as he came unto his house, he found all these persons there, coming on other accounts to speak with him, which he in his thoughts had in the way pitched on; when he saw that, he admired and blessed God for the providence, and presently told them, that he intended forthwith to send for them all in particular, to assist him in duty and prayer to God for the recovery and releasement of such a person possessed by Satan, and would try their interest with God for him, and on his behalf: they gladly heard it, and entertained the motion, and so continued that evening some hours together, very fervent in prayer; and after the duty performed, they all departed to their several rests. The next morning very early, the party possessed came to the Minister, well composed, and sensible, and his tongue restored to his wonted bigness and station, speaking to the Minister plainly and distinctly, that he wrestled with God for him, for he affirmed, by his prayers he was healed and delivered from the evil one that vexed him: The Minister demanded him, By what time he had releasement? He answered, by such a time in the precedent evening: by which the Minister found, it was about the same time he was in prayer to God for him; and so both Minister and party gave glory to God for it. This was the sum of the story, and he avouched he had it from a godly Minister of his acquaintance, who received it from the Minister's own mouth that was the actor of it: and coming from so serious and godly man, and especially in the publick exercise, it deserves as much

much of an historical faith, as any story of like kind whatsoe'er. And why the church should now want miracles, I know not, seeing the primitive christians had that abundance of them; if it is not, because that the church of Rome have of late so cheated the world with so many legends of them, that we will now give credit to none, because there are so many false ones coyned, and so by reason of our little faith, we are deprived of them.

But to return, that I may not seem singular in this opinion of the continuation of Apostles in the church of Christ, which I press not as a matter of necessary faith, but dogmatically only, I shall recite some of good authority, to defend me from the censure of singularity herein; but for such opinions as are only conversant about the accidentals of Religion, I would have that of the Poet recognized,

Hinc Veniam petimusq; damusq; vicissim.

And first D. Hammond *Resolv. 6. page 351.* asserted, That in the primitive times, Bishops were usually called Apostles, and manifested, that the notion Apostles is not always taken properly or strictly to be understood. And M. Parker *Of the Cross, part 2. 126.* affirms, That the ancient church extended the Apostolical times beyond the age of the Apostles, even to the Nicene Council: and therefore some Authors, and persons of antiquity, are said to live *Temporibus Apostolorum*, in the time of the Apostles, that lived about 300. years after Christ; and our Bishop Jewel admits of these first five centuries of years after Christ, to be Apostolical, pure, and uncorrupted, for the main: and therefore I cannot see what disadvantage or inconvenience can happen to the church of Christ, by the entertainment of this dogmatal point and tenet, but rather much many ways by want thereof; for as I said before, what general or universal officer doth the church now enjoy, that can rightly preach abroad to the conversion of the Gentile Nations in the world, unless under the notion and office of an Apostle? for all other ordinary officers are merely relatives, and cannot move or act authoritatively, beyond their own proper spheres and relations, to wit, their flocks and churches; unless they will hereby inevitably grant a liberty of prophesie to all gifted persons, and so rank themselves amongst those that do it only *virtute doni non autoritatis*, unto the unconverted world; and to acknowledge that it is only done *virtute doni*, is to slight the authority of the church, and tacitely to conclude, that the church hath no power in it to confer such an office, whereby Christ may be publickly taught unto the Gentile or Heathenish world; for it is clear, that the preaching of the Word unto the world, is an act of authority, *Rom. 10. and Math. 28. 19.* for *how shall they preach, unless they be sent?* and to prophesie, interpret, or preach the Word, *virtute doni*, was only a relative duty, and permitted and exercised within the church assemblies only, that I can collect either

either from the practise of the first churches in the Acts of the Apostles, or their Epistles; and therefore all that were sent to the conversion of the Ethnick world, were sent ordinarily from the church (some extraordinary cases only excepted, which never amounts unto a rule) in the notion of Apostles, as was *Paul* and *Barnabas*, &c. and for want of the continuation of these ordinary Officers in the church, we are enforced to maintain heterodoxical opinions concerning the authority, the power of preaching, missions, &c. and in effect, conclude with the Papists, that there must be an universal Bishop, or at least as absurdly, universal Elders, Pastors, Teachers, Ministers, being merely relatives, that must have power over the whole world. From the discoursed premises, I shall only add this argument, If the word cannot lawfully ordinarily be preached to the conversion of the world, either by private christians or officers now at present authorized in the churches, merely as such officers, then surely there are some officers wanting unto the churches, by which it may be rightly dispensed. But the *major* being formerly cleared, the consequence I believe none will deny, that looks upon the preaching of the word as an act of authority and office: therefore the conclusion is evident.

And therefore to shut up this discourse, I am very much of opinion, that all primitive offices and officers which were of positive institutions in the Apostles times, are moral positive laws, and still constringent and perpetual, unless you can show their repeals. See *Cawdry* on the Sabbath, part. 1. cap. 2. hereon, and therefore binding unto the church in all ages. Confer hereunto that of *Eph.* 4. 11, 12, 13. All which indeed the church doth virtually and implicitly maintain, though they have laid by the names thereof, so necessary do they find the acts of the said offices, though the offices themselves nominally are thrust out of doors: When we send Preachers to our American plantations for the discipling the poor Indians, are they not tantamount as Apostles? When *Eusebius*, the centurists, and later Church Historiographers, do historifie the acts and occurrences of the church, are they not in a qualified sense Evangelists, when persons do interpret and enucleate dark or prophetical Scriptures, do they not look like Prophets? When by the faith and prayers of the faithful, corruptions are vanquished, the will reformed, health restored, and Satanical dispossessions accomplished, do they not carry the face of miracles? And why then should we not entertain the offices and gifts themselves, nominally as well as operatively and virtually, though with some mark of distinction, as by a crescent, as unto younger brothers, acknowledging always, and that justly, a pre-eminence of gifts and spirit in those of the first age, and nearest unto the fountain of life and verity; but far thereby from concluding that their offices were buried with the first founders, together with their most excellent gifts in one arme, but still kept alive and preserved for the good of the Church, and the perfecting of the Saints, for the

the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the station of the fulness of Christ. And that none may judge me rash or presumptory in this opinion, I submit it to the tryal of Christ's churches, and add,

Adhuc sub Judice lis est,

Try all things, hold fast that which is good. Let every one be persuaded fully in his own mind, and in the mean to walk in that measure of light that he hath attained unto.

In the next place, the question may be seasonably set, how shall we know or try false Apostles from true? Christ's ministers from antichrist's? or the pseudo-prophets from the Orthodox? Seeing the false ones can transform themselves into the Apostles of Christ, and say they are Apostles and Ministers of Christ, as well as true ones, 2 Cor. 11. 13. Rev. 2. 2.

This question indeed is worthy the discussion, useful both for the rectifying of the private judgement of discretion, as well as of the publicke authoritative judgement of the church in this particular; for indeed it is no new thing, nor strange to the purest churches of God, to have false Prophets, and false Apostles in them. In the days of *Ahab*, 1 Kings 18. 19. the prophets of *Baal* were four hundred and fifty; and of the *Groves*, four hundred; but the true ones hid by *Obadiah* were but one hundred. *Ezekiel*, *Jeremiah*, met them too in Babylon, Jer. 28, 29 chap. and *Ezek.* 12. 2, 3. The Apostolique primitive churches were much troubled and vexed with false Apostles, false prophets, and false teachers also, witness 2 Cor. 11. 13. 2 Pet. 2. 1. Gal. 5. 12. *Math.* 24. 12. and those churches of Ephesus, Pergamus, Sardis, &c. had their share also in this trouble, by the doctrine of *Balaam*, *Nicolaitans*, *Jezebel*, &c. and this God often suffers, with the sad consequences thereof, in and upon his churches, to make the Truth more clear and precious, to try the godly, and discover hypocrites, and to shew his power and wisdom, that can produce good out of evil, and preserve his undefiled in the midst of contagions; but the wisdom of the Saints is to try them, and discover them, that so they may be avoided, with all their malignant influences, and pernicious doctrines.

Now a false Apostle or Prophet may be discovered two ways: First, Either from his false doctrine or prophesie: Or, Secondly, From his false call or mission. The ancient Prophets of God, were called *Seers*, from the clear divine revelations and irradiations they had of the mind of God, 2 Kings 17. 13. and this was called the *Gift of Prophesie*. Next, They had a clear call to exercise that Gift. But the false Prophets, they prophesied out of their own hearts, and follow their own spirits, and have seen nothing,

Nuns, Doctors, Proctors, Summers, *cum multis aliis &c?* And again, hath not this adulterers, instead of those spurious Issues, spewed out of her bosome the sound and orthodox offices and officers of Christ? As where shall you hear in all her Egyptian or Babylonish Territory, the sound of those Gospel officers, as Pastors, Teachers, Elders, Bishops rightly qualified, &c? Therefore sure shame unto all such that will own a derivation of office and call from such a church, that hath not only banished such officers out of her jurisdiction, as are truly Christ's, but is become her self an adulterers, and the mother of harlots, and also the Throne of Antichrist; and yet if any for all this will endeavour to avouch their calls and missions good, as unto the essentials thereof from the church of Rome; they must in the first place maintain, that she is truly a church of Christ, as unto the essence at least, and to separate and depart from such a church, I know not how they can defend it without sin; therefore either be so ingenuous as to acknowledge to be a true essential christian church, and justify your calls therefrom, and hold communion with her, or else acknowledge her to be the Synagogue of Satan, and of Antichrist, together with all her dependencies of missions, calls, and ordinances, which at best are but antichristian, and therefore worthily to be rejected, removed, and loathed of all true christian hearts: Besides, we have a command for it; *Come out of her my people*: and I pray, how shall we depart or come out of her, if we communicate with her in her holy things? Indeed, ingenuous M. Baxter affirms, if the Pope be Antichrist, the case is clear, as the good Bishops, *Downam, Jewel, &c.* hath evinced. See his Worcestershire agreement, p. 69, and 70.

Object. But it may be objected, How then should the first Reformers that fell off from Rome, have a right call to the Ministerial offices of the church, if they had it not from that church from which they departed?

Answer. Surely they never owned their call from Rome, from whence they had departed, and had manifested to be the seat of Antichrist, but withal assert, that their call was somewhat extraordinary, and somewhat ordinary: God in that time of spiritual darkness, moved most powerfully and vigorously on the hearts of the first Restorers; as *Wickliffe, Husse, Luther, &c.* and gave them such a call of abilities and courage, that was not ordinary in this great first undertaking, and breaking forth of light.

Secondly. He gave them the ordinary call of their respective churches, to be their Pastors, Teachers, &c. So being both abilitated, and called of God and man, they had a true and justifiable call to the Ministry of Christ. If any one say, the Ministerial office must precede in order before the Being of the church; I grant, that the church cannot be called or gathered without a precedent officer; for, *How shall they hear without a Preacher?* Or, *how shall they obey, unless they be sent?* But withal, rejoyn, and super-

super-add, that in the first constitution of churches, extraordinary calls did supply all wants otherwise; so I am of opinion, it may be granted that in so miserable collapsed church estate, as the Antichristian darkness in the times of the first Reformation was, God did supply (not with ordinary gifts only) those that he employed in that work of the first Reformation, and in absence of the ordinary call, God gave them an additament of parts and gifts, not ordinary, which was to be observed in all their constant course and Ministry, carried on with a Spirit of extraordinary courage and abilities: Witness that saying of *Luther*, when he was advised by some of his friends, in respect of danger, that he should abstain from a Diet, wherein he promised to give his adversaries a conference; he answered, if there were as many devils at the Diet, as there were tykes in the City, he would not fear them, but would among them. But in rightly constituted churches, the ordinary call is not to be neglected, but to be attended to, as a positive Law of God indispensible, and not in the least to be slighted; but where God hath dispensed, by interposing an intervening necessity, and clear obstacle thereunto, and therein God loves obedience better then sacrifice.

Secondly, I answer, That the first Ministerial Reformers never maintained a personal succession of Ministry and Officers, from the Apostles lineally, through the loyns of Antichrist, but only a succession of doctrine, which in all ages was by the invisible church maintained and asserted, sometimes with more perspicuity and visibility then other; for if we should grant a personal succession of officers and Ministry from the Apostles days, we must needs also grant a perpetual and necessary visibility of a church, and consequently, a truth of Ministry, and Ordinances of Christ, in the Antichristian state; and how a true christian Ministry and Ordinances can be found in that Antichristian state, in that man of sin, that mystery of iniquity, that whore of Babylon, as I formerly said, I know not; or how the same state can be both metly antichristian and christian; a Whore of Babylon, and a Spouse of Jesus Christ; a Ministry of God, and a mysterie of iniquity; a Temple of God, and of Idols; I leave it to the judicious to consider.

In the next place in the affirmative, I hold, That a true and justifiable call, respecting the essence thereof, may be received in any the churches of Christ holding the foundation aright, of godliness towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, though otherwise differing among themselves in many circumstantial points; yet, *de bene esse*, it may more comfortably be received from one church then another, as formerly was evinced; the more pure, spiritual, and sound the churches are, the more sound, spiritual, and edifying their Ministerial functions are, the more loose, unsound, and corrupted the churches are, the more corrupt and loose their Ministerial call will be: Therefore the godliest

liest churches, and soundest in the faith, are in the first place, for missions, Ministerial calls and offices, to be sought and repaired unto.

But if any one should ask me, what I thought then of the present Ministry of England, as now constituted, who, as Presbyters, ordain one another to their Ministerial offices, who were first ordained themselves by the late Bishops, and so holding their ordination from them, as from true Presbyters.

I answer, and I think it not meet, but contrary to the simplici-ty of the Gospel, to cloud my judgement in any thing; If the English Presbyterie (as the Helvetian and Genevan hath done to their perpetual glory) had declared to the world, that the Romish church was the antichristian whore, and so publickly renounced all ministerial calls, as derived from her, then I grant such ministry and Presbyters to be true Ministers and Presbyters, as unto the essence and being thereof (though collating of offices, merely as officers or Presbyters, without the just assent, and assistance of their churches, is not so justifiable, as hereafter I may have occasion to evince) but if they maintained their calls from the Bishops to be good, as by succession of Presbyters, they have utterly nullified and undone their case, and their call too, in my judgement; and my reason is, for what was not good and justifiable in the fountain and first origin, cannot be made justifiable by succession in the streams and branches: a polluted fountain cannot send forth sweet wholesome streams; *causa causa, causa causati.* If that Episcopacy was antichristian, as most of them grant, (though both name and office are warrantable in a Gospel regulated sense) from whom they had their first mission and calls, how then comes their calls more warrantable then that of their first Authors and Founders? If Bishops in their ministry were orthodox and sound, how came they to supplant them, and pull them down? Christ's ministry is not for the work of desolating and dethroning Brethren in the same holy function, but rather for consolidating and confirming; therefore surely there was somewhat amiss, all was not right, or else they might have stood to this day. Witness the National Covenant against Antichristian Prelacy, &c. But the truth is, Episcopacy, as it was then constituted in England, was of the off spring and brood of Babylon; they always held their call good, as ministerial Bishops, having their personal calls from such successively, as first received it from the church of Rome, and so could never be made good or justifiable in the succession; neither will it suffice, as some say, to silve it, that Christ had always a church of invisible Saints under antichrist; because they must prove themselves then to succeed that very church, or those very invisible Saints; and not only that, but that those very Saints were ministerial officers or Presbyters, or else all will be in vain, according to their own concessions; for men may be Saints, but not ministerially Saints sent, or Presbyters, who according to them,

them, hath the alone power of ordination, and therefore in want of such true ministerial Presbyters in the succession of the Ministry, must either unavoidably acknowledge, according to their own principles, their ministerial offices void and null, or otherwise plainly concede, that they have it derivatively from the church of Rome: and what a sorry call that is, (if at least so to be called) I have formerly evinced. And it is a maxime in Law, that *quod initio vitiosum est, non potest tractu temporis convalescere.* See more hereon; *Dy Plessis Treat. of the Church*, p. 3624. and *Bishop Jewel Defen. Apolog.* part 2. page 131. who are witnesses without exception, manifesting the vanity of such a claim. But I proceed to the next verse.

Verse 3. *And hast born, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*

Observe from this,

Observe. That false Teachers, and false Apostles, are great persecutors of the faithful ones of Christ. The church of Ephesus had suffered much from such false Teachers, for Christ's sake, and his truth. The false Prophets of old were alwaies against the true ones, and caused them often to be smitten and afflicted; as *Micahiah* was jeered by *Zedekiah*, *Which way went the Spirit from me to thee?* 1 Kings 22. 2, 4. and that not all, but was smitten disgracefully on the cheek also: *Shemaiah* stirred up the authority against *Jeremiah* the Lord's Prophet, and would have cast him in the prison, *Jer. 29. 24.* Yea saith *Ezekiel 22. 25.* There is a conspiracy of her Prophets in the midst thereof; not only like Foxes, but even like Lions, ravening the prey. These false Teachers have been always very pernicious to Gods true church: What great persecutors *Arrius* and his followers were to *Athanasius* and the Orthodox? They were the Priests and false Prophets of old, that shed the blood of Christ and his Apostles, though not by their own hands, yet by incensing the authority to do it: How willingly would *Pilate* release Christ, if it were not for the out-cry of the Priests and their followers: false prophets still exclaim and fastigate the Magistrate, and tells them, that they shall do God good service in sacrificing the Saints, which they term heretiques, or schismatiques, and troublers of their peace and union; but when you meet such a fiery persecuting spirit in any that pretend to Christ, judge of it whence it is by these Scriptures, *Gal. 5. 20. Col. 3. 12, 13.* So great hath been the malice of false Prophets, and false Teachers, ever against the true Saints, that they have never rested till they have got their blood shed. It was the Pope and his false Prelates and Priests, that first filled all Europe with blood; it was the same cursed progeny that brought so many precious souls to the stake and faggot in Queen *Maries* days, otherwise of her self, as History testifies, of nature good enough.

Quere

Quere But it may here be queried, for what things ought we to suffer with patience and constancy, and not to faint under the burden thereof?

I have partly formerly answered this question in the ninth verse of the first chapter: I shall here add one word more, for the re-affirming the judgment, and keeping the conscience undefiled herein. First, Know that every soul is strictly obliged to observe all the Laws of God, whether Moral, Natural, or Positive, and to undergo all sufferings whatsoever, rather than to dishonour God by the breach of the former, or neglect his worship by the contempt of the latter: We are not only bound, under persecutors to keep the conscience undefiled, in not committing gross sins, as Idolatry, &c. but also we are obliged to perform all our positive christian duties, though we suffer for it: as we find that *Daniel* gave a testimony in this case, thought to the hazard of persecution to extremity, and would not forbear his three times a day solemn prayers, and that upon his knees in his chamber, and his windows open towards Jerusalem; though he knew his enemies might by that means surprise and accuse him, and cause him to be cast into the Den of Lions; yet did he hold himself bound daily to the Law of outward Worship, though the looking to Jerusalem was but a ceremony ordained by God upon *Solomon's* prayer, *1 Kings 8. 9.* Also the Macchabean Worthies did not think that persecution did, or could discharge them from the strict observing even of the Ceremonial Law, of not eating Swine's flesh, but for it endured all extremity of torments, as the Story relates; and for it are justly ranked among the Worthies of the old Testament, who lived and died in faith, *Heb. 11.* So jealous is God not only for the preservation of his Moral Laws, but even of these Ceremonial and Ritual Laws; that after he hath discovered his Will about them, and commands them, they forthwith become morally positive Laws, and obligent, until their repeals from the same authority are manifested and cleared. Therefore by this Judge, what a lax and loose Religion does *Hobbes* his *Leviathan* prescribe unto us, to submit to any Religion that the chief or sovereign Magistrate shall dictate to us; and that it is not christian duty to suffer for any Article, but for that, that Jesus Christ is the Messias; so subjecting almost the whole will of God in morals and positives, unto the will of man. But as to this, let us like true christians pray, *Libera (Domine) nos a mala.*

Verse 4. *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*

We have heard the virtues and graces of the Church of Ephesus, and how she had a just and honourable approbation for them, yet notwithstanding there is a tang in the end, which shows some defection in her; and after all her commendations, there is a *Nevertheless*

Nevertheless follows close in the heels thereof, with somewhat to be said against her: just as it is often said of the good Kings of Israel, in the book of Kings, *That they walked and did uprightly in the sight of God, as David the King;* but withal, there is added a *but;* *But they departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, that made Israel to sin.* Hence by the way Note.

Observe. That the purest churches, and the best christians, are not altogether exempted from stains, but have their spots and blemishes, as well as reiplendent graces. It was the Spouse condition in *Cant. 1. 5.* where she describes her self, and saith, *I am black, but comly (o ye daughters of Jerusalem) as the Tents of Kedar, as the Curtains of Solomon.* Let us but survey the first churches and christians, to elucidate and confirm this truth; and seeing they stood nearest the light, even the Sun of Truth, and his Twelve illustrious radiating Signs, (his Apostles) in my judgement, they are to be reputed the soundest, and the purest; yet see whether we read not of their *Maculae*, or spots, as well as of their shining graces. The church of Corinth was a famous church, yet she had her failings, contaminating the holy feasts, and their Agapees with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and besides, the foul errors of false Apostles, as denying the Resurrection, &c. The church of Galatia was not much inferiour in her wantonizing after liveless ceremonial fancies, and pressed them, as necessary (with Christ) unto salvation; and when *Paul* opposed them herein, for whose sake they once were ready to pull out their eyes to do him good, yet now for crossing their capricious whimsies, is become their greatest adversary. The churches of Ephesus, Pergamus, &c, had their several encomiums for their graces, yet there were some things chargeable on them, for waxing cold in their first love, for admitting the Doctrine of Balaam, Nicolaitans, Jezabel, &c. If we descend from bodies collective to individual persons, we shall find the same lot beset unto all; consider *Noah, Job, David, Peter, &c.* but I desire not to rake up the faults of the Saints, which are not left upon record to encourage to sin, but to be presidents of the grace of God, and as examples for encouragement unto repentant sinners.

Because thou hast left thy first love. Some difficulty seems in these words; whether by first love be intended Christ whom the church of Ephesus had left? Or, that first ardent affection and zeal which she bore to Christ at her first conversion? The latter Interpretation to me is clear, Because the church of Ephesus had not withdrawn her self from the faith of Christ, as is evident by the two precedent verses; for it was for Christ's sake, and his truth, that she had suffered much, both from wicked persons, and wicked teachers; therefore, as long as her faith was sound, she could not be said to have left Christ, as her first Love, and taken a new love, or new object of her faith: But that for which she is charged as faulty, is, that she hath left her first love, that is, her first zeal, and fervent

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fervent affections, which she bore to Christ and his Ordinances at her first conversion; and this is plain from the next verse, where she is commanded to repent, and to do her first works. From hence observe;

Observe. That it is frequently seen, that many true and faithful christians and churches, do much abate and fail in their first zeal and love to Christ and his ways, in a short progres of time after their conversion, or from their first entertainment of the Truth. *Paul* did much complain of the church of Galatia in this particular, at their first entertainment of the truth, they were so full of affections and zeal, that they were even ready to pull out their eyes to do *Paul* service, who was their great Apostle; yet shortly after he complains of them, as if they had entertained another Gospel, and exclaims; *O foolish Galathians! who hath bewitched you?* It seems Ephesus was much faulty herein; and so were divers others of the primitive churches; and therefore the Apostles were very urgent and pressing in their preachings, to maintain love alive, and of the three eminent Gospel graces, Faith, Hope, and Charity, charity has the precedency. First, in regard it hath a more extensive object then the other two; faith and hope respects only God, and eternal glory as their object; charity hath not only God for its object, but the Saints also. Secondly, it hath the precedency, in that love abideth in glory, when faith and hope ceaseth: Thirdly, it is as the soul and life unto other graces: faith it self is but as a dead carcass, unless it be enlivened by love. To know and entertain the Gospel and its truth, is an excellent gift and quality, yet if we do not *Ανθείνειν εἰς ἀγάπην, Receive the truth in the love thereof;* we may know so much as may justly condemn us for our unproficiency, but not save us, for want of love. Indeed I could wish that this were still a paradox, That the love of christians is waxed cold; for it was once a hard saying, to be a christian, and to want love; I have read that some christians of the first ages after Christ were so famous amongst their heathen adversaries for this grace of love, that they were ready even to die one for another; whereof their very enemies taking notice, with approbation, when they would commend the love of any, they would say proverbially, that it was like the love of christians: but now, O christians! *Quantum mutasti ab illo!* It was far otherwise with you at your first coming to the truth, then it is now; then every one loved one the other for the truths sake. At the first breaking out of light in England from under Antichristian clouds and darkness, every one had his breast on fire for the promotion of truth and godliness; Presbyterian, Independent, and Anabaptist, were then all under the notion of Puritans, and Non-conformists, zealous for the common cause of advancement of Christ and his Gospel: what is the cause that ye have now left your first love, both towards God, and towards one another? Is God and Truth grown less lovely then at first? Or were you mistaken then

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in the right objects of your love? I rather fear, of the both, that the God of the world hath blinded you, when ye seek to advance every one his particular interest by tearing one the other most uncharitably, as bears, not as christians, who are meek, full of bowels of compassion, easily to be entreated, &c. *Have ye not one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one Spirit, one Scripture, one common hope of Salvation?* and yet look upon one the other, as the Jews did on the Samaritans, and that for some small differences in circumstantial of Religion: It would better besuit christians to be like the good Samaritan, that will be ready to pour oyl and wine into the wounds of their afflicted brethren, not vinegar and gall, which was the work of those that piercd Christ, not of his followers and disciples.

*Tantane Ira Fragrum? —
Sed prestat moles componere fluctu.*

In the next place, all sorts of christians have sadly experienced the truth of this position, that they have forsaken their first love. Where is the love of the Presbyterian to his Geneva model, as if it had been the very Elixar of all church Discipline? Was he not even fire and sword against Episcopacy, that stood in his way as a bar to the advancement of his Form; and now Episcopacy being down, and the aspect of authority benigne towards them, yet how remiss and cold are they in setting up their Elders? I believe they fear the *Iure Divino* of it, and therefore will not move a foot farther, without a Sovereign hand for to support it: but all this shows they have much abated in their first love. Next, What is become of the ardent affections, and frequent private and publicke exercises and assemblies of the Independents? Were they not the only men in the world, in their first appearance, that carried the face and judgement of Saints, yet now how remiss and cold they are grown, all see? How formal, or rather carnal, are some of them become, that were once as fire in the hearth, and in the sheaf, ready to warm and enflame all that came by, by their ardent affections and duties? Yea, are not many of them, that would not be satisfied otherwise, but with hewen stones for the building of the Temple, evidentially visible Saints for the House of the Lord, now content, and sit down satisfied in a parochial congregation of a mixed multitude, the tenth whereof, if so much be good wheat amongst the pile of chaff that answereth that part which they have for their maintenance, they may account themselves most happy? And lastly, How is the great zeal of the Anabaptists (so called) slaked? There was a time when they would compas Sea and Land to make a profelyte, at their first appearance, how strict they were to Discipline and Order, that they might justly be called above all others, the Disciplinarians? Yet now how remiss they are unto it, all know, by a too large toleration

tion of errors amongst them? And how flat their zeal is for the promotion of the truth, all see: yea strange how they are changed from their first principles, who at first loved one the other as christians, and for the Truths sake; yet now who more worldly or haughty then they? Therefore seeing ye have all come short of your duty, and made a defection from your first love, take the exhortation of the Spirit in the next verse.

Verse 5. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

The Spirit sets a *Memento*, or *Memento*, home on the affection and zeal-fallen church of Ephesus, and to re-mind her of her first state and condition, when she had a greater measure of zeal and love both towards God and his Saints; then now she had; that that consideration might so work upon her, as to make a renovation in her affections, and to be-think her self of a recovery of that measure of zeal and love which once she had, and bring forth such fruits and good works as formerly she did, as the true effects and issues of that love, or else &c. Hence Note.

Observ. That the contemplation of grace, is the only Gospel motive unto true repentance. The commemoration of God's former gracious dealing unto a backslidden soul, will operate very strongly (if not judicially hardened) to recal him unto his God.

The straying prodigal experienced this truth in himself, *Luke* 15. 17. when he came to himself, and considered, how that many hired servants in his fathers house had bread enough, and yet he starving for hunger, it made him to reflect upon that full and gracious condition when he was as an obedient son with his father, which moved him to set on the resolution to be a Trewant no longer, but to arise, and go unto his Father, and say, *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.* If any thing will break the course of sin, and recall the heart unto its first love, the consideration of the former gracious dealings of God with it, will effect it: It will reason thus with it self, was it not better with me when I kept close to God, then now it is, since I have broken with him? Was not my soul more at peace within it self, when I was more zealous of God's glory, and of keeping his commands, then now when I am more remiss, and colder in my affections, both towards God and christian duties? Was not then my soul more spiritual, and my delights more heavenly, then now when I am clogg'd with the vanities of this world, and the bewitching lusts thereof? Had I not then a freer access to God, and of a freer spirit in my approaches, crying *Abba, Father*, then now, having strayed from him, instead thereof having a spirit of bondage, and of fear? In short, when I kept close with God, did not a taste of heaven (as it were) appear

appear in all my performances and relations; but now having departed from him, all is turned into hell and bitterness against me? Surely those considerations of grace formerly received, will work more upon an ingenious spirit, then any thundring Legal threats whatsoever: yet I add, if these will not do, Christ hath another course and method, and can come judicially, and remove his candlestick from amongst such obstinate and unrepentant sinners.

Observ. 2. Another Note is, That true Gospel repentance consists not only in changing the mind, but of practise and conversation also. *Melius, Rescipisci, to wax wiser, or repent, do not only consist to grow wiser in the judgement, but in the choice of the practical affections also.* If the will be not right, as to its objects, as well as the judgement, it will not denominate a true repentant. The church of Ephesus was right, as to her faith, for which she suffered in patience, yet her practise and affections were not straight; for which she had the check, and commanded to do the first works, works of love, works of charity, works of piety, which formerly she had been zealous in: In true repentance there is a *Terminus a quo*; and *Terminus ad quem*. Turn ye, turn ye every one from the abomination of his ways: there is the *terminus a quo*: but this is not all, a negative righteousness will not serve turn, but there must be *Terminus ad quem*, a positive righteousness also: There must be a doing of the first works of holiness and godliness towards God, and of love and righteousness towards all; but more especially towards the household of faith: These are the adequate ingredients of true and Gospel repentance. It is a gross deceit in many, that think that they have believed sufficiently, and they have repented sufficiently, when they have altered their judgment, or at least, their weather-cock opinion, from one external form unto another; as when an Episcopal man is become for a Presbyter. O most kind and benigne Sun-shine, quoth he; but when a Presbyterian turns Independent in judgement, he presently cries out, that heaven is opened unto him; never considering that the kingdom of heaven does consist in godliness and righteousness; but in outward forms of worship, which if rightly regulated, something of each might be rightly admitted to make a just composure. In the next place, some think their repentance very sound, when they have changed one error for another; when of an Arminian or Pelagian, are become Antinomists, rightly so termed, denying and opposing the morality of the Law, as a rule of duty obliging unto christians: when of an Arrian, or Antitrinitarian, are become Tritheites, or worshippers of three Gods &c: So corrupt is the heart of man, that will make his own opinion on an Idol, and all that looks not that way, nor brings any flowers to that sacrifice (and yet otherwise apparently gracious) shall neither have the title of a true believer, or a repentant soul, amongst them: Therefore with all such I would leave this Scripture,

pture, as a Signet upon their finger, *Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works.*

Obseru. 3. Another Note from the authority of the person, (Christ) that gives this *memento*, is, That Christ's commands in his Word, should be very powerful and efficacious, to bring us unto repentance. Shall Christ be our Anamnestes, or Remembrancer, and set our faults before us, by his Spirit in the Word, and shall not our hearts be molten for it? Shall he call from heaven to us in his ever-living word of Prophesie, and shall we not intend, or hearken to that heavenly vision? He gave but one glance on *Peter*, reflecting on his unkindness and denial, which caused *Peter* to turn aside, and weep bitterly: And shall he not only look upon us with his daylie providential acts of goodness and mercy, which leadeth unto repentance, but give us line upon line, and precept upon precept, and yet not return by repentance: It is the signe of most obdurate hearts, and of stiff-necked sinners.

But some will say, We want wills to it, and if Christ gave wills as well as commands, we should readily follow him.

I answer, first, Where Christ lays his commands on his chosen ones, he also gives there the first grace of his Spirit to enable to obey that command; and we know the Spirit may be opposed, and the Spirit may be quenched, and is so often by our own defects, and by reason of the abundance of corruptions; so that the want of wills to good things, proceed from our own base and corrupt wills, not for want of power from Christ, who commands us to them; but take notice, though the operations of the Spirit may by the Elect themselves be opposed, darkned, and quenched partially, but not totally and finally, but at last will get the victory, in bringing forth the work of God unto perfection.

Secondly, It is in vain for persons in an unregenerate state to complain for want of wills, for before Christ moves thereon by his Spirit of grace, they cannot rightly will any good thing or work; but the first grace being given to any, and after follows a complaint of want of will to holy performances, it is a good signe, that there is a good will unto it, or else there would not be a complaint, which is only for a greater measure, nor for a total want of will unto it.

Thirdly, and lastly, Understand that Christ often exhibits his commands of faith and repentance, even to the reprobate themselves, to manifest unto them their duty, the due performance whereof, they have in their original first parent lost and forfeited, and God is not obliged to restore it, seeing the vindication of Gods justice is as dear unto him as his mercy; and therefore when Christ in his Ministry bids such persons to believe and repent, they never complain of want of wills unto the work, but rather add sin unto sin, in a more obdurate unbelief. But to proceed...

[Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will removeth thy Candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.] As if Christ had said unto the

the church of Ephesus, if thou wylt not return unto me, and unto thy first love, by this gracious warning I have given thee, be sure I will come in judgment against thee, and that shortly; and though my appearance as yet unto thee (whiles there is hopes of thy recovery) be in the likeness of the Son of man, one of thy own nature, and compassionate towards thee, yet know, if thou wylt not repent, and do thy first works of love, zeal, and charity, I shall forthwith come in another like reseimblance, having mine eyes as a flame of fire, and a two-edg'd sword proceeding from my mouth, and destroy thee and thy church-state, and that quickly, unless thou speedily amend thy faults.

Obseru. Hence Note, That a speedy repentance is the only means to avert the judgements of God from falling upon a church or people. *Ahab*'s repentance, though it was but hypocritical and unsound, yet stayed God in executing his judgements on him. The repentance of *David* and *Solomon* for their Adultery and Idolatry, stayed God's hand against them; and many others of the Kings of Israel experienced the goodness of God in this particular, and by reason of their sincere endeavours of returning unto God, by demolishing their abominations and idolatries, God promised them he would not bring the evil in their days, which he had denounced against his Idolatrous people the Jews, but should be gathered in peace unto their fathers. The Ninivites upon their repentance in sackcloth and ashes, on *Zosias* preaching, had a longer date set to their political state and City: and this repentance too ought to be speedy; for who knows how long God will suffer (though long often he does) before he sends forth the inevitable decree of execution: As God is merciful, slow to anger, slow to wrath, yet know, that God is also just, and that one attribute is as dear unto him as another; the duty we see is presently required, and we know not, though God defers the execution, whether he will give us hearts again unto the work, after we have once slighted his gracious calls and invitations thereunto: It was an old Proverb, *Sera sapient Phryges*, which may be our los, if we defer too long: and we know that to be true, that *sera penitentia raro vera*: and consider how it was too late for Jerusalem to howl and cry after she had slighted the many gracious invitations of our Saviour unto repentance, who would have gathered her, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing: When *Titus* the Roman General had cast a Trench against her walls, and bolted up her gates by the siege of a potent Army, Christ tells the church of Ephesus, and the rest of those Sister Asian churches, if they do not repent, he will come quickly in judgements against them, as indeed he did in few ages after, by the incursions of barbarous Nations, and quite removed their churches from amongst them.

Quero. But is not this a Legal teaching, to denounce wrath and judgements on non-amendment, or for want of repentance?

I answer, Such as object thus, are much mistaken, for repen-

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tance is not strictly a Legal duty, but a duty Evangelical, and of grace : for the Law admits of no repentance : for it saith, *The soul that sinneth, shall die* : It is the Gospel of grace alone, that saith *Repent, and live*, that is, Return from thy wicked ways, and accept of Christ as thy Lord, Saviour, and Teacher, and thou shalt be saved : The Law is inexorable, and exacts the whole satisfaction as the penalty of the breach thereof, which was fully laid on Christ, and satisfied by him ; It is grace alone that accepts the will for the deed, and admits of repentance in the sinner, whiles the Surety hath compleatly satisfied the justice and rigour, of the offended Law.

Secondly, What God hath sanctified, no man should call unholy ; for hath not Christ commanded this duty of repentance very abundantly in the Gospel, and very often to be interpreted for faith it self, and shall we count it Legal ? *Repent, and be baptized, for the remission of sins*, Acts 2. 38. *Repent, or ye shall all likewise perish*, &c. But I confess there is no little difference between Repentance under the Gospel administration, and the old Testament administration ; under the one, the doctrine thereof is more clearly taught, upon more evident terms of grace : In the other, more darker, and on more sensitive and carnal grounds. As Christ under the Law was veiled under clouds, and typical ordinances, but under the Gospel, more clearly preached unto all ; so his doctrines of grace, faith, and repentance, were not by far so radiant before the days of his manifestation in the flesh, as after ; so the difference lies in the degrees of clearness, not of the verity and truth of the doctrine.

Quere 2. But again some may query, Is not this to joyn Repentance unto Christ in some causality unto salvation, and to set them both, as it were, in a joyn commission, though somewhat subordinately unto that great end ?

Indeed this is a question worthy the clearing, which many unskilful ignorantly handle, not knowing how to divide the Word of God aright, do miserably stumble in it. Understand, for clearing of this in the order of causes, God's free love is the first moving and predeterminating cause unto life and salvation, Christ next is the alone procuring and meritorious cause ; and as Christ hath purchased the Elect unto himself by his death and merit ; so as a King, or a Soveraigne Legislator, he sets up a Royal Law for his Redeemed people to walk by ; to wit, that of Repentance towards God, and Faith unto Jesus Christ. Now he lets not Faith nor Repentance in any causality with himself in this great work of life and salvation, this is only but a principal part of his revealed Will and Law, that he will have his redeemed ones to walk in ; he doth not require those graces in them, as co-operating, or efficient causes unto life or justification, nor as conditions, properly so called, for on the performance of every condition, by virtue of compact, it hath a legal influence, merit, and causality unto the production of

of its end : Neither indeed is there any such compact in the Word since the fall of *Adam*, that on the performance of any conditions, be they never so Evangelical, as Faith, Repentance, &c. Justification, or life, was promised thereupon, only the condition of the old covenant between God and man, was death upon disobedience, and life upon obedience : Man having forfeited the one by his disobedience, Christ steps in as the Mediator of a better and surer covenant, and makes his soul an offering unto death, which was the full performance of the penal condition due unto the sinner, and so absolutely purchased a blessed seed unto himself, and on such stable conditions performed altogether by himself, that they cannot possibly forfeit their inheritance, being in so sure a hand, and are still heirs, though whiles under years they differ not from servants ; that is, whiles under sin, and unregeneracy, are still in bondage, until faith come to discover their heirship, and interest unto the purchased possession ; and in the mean time, by evil works, they are as enemies, strangers, and aliens to God, and the commonweal of *Israel*, according to the old Legal distinction, they have notwithstanding *Fus ad Rem*, though not *Fus in Re*.

And though I deny faith or repentance to be conditions (properly so called) in the covenant to life or justification, yet I say, they are required in the same new Law, Covenant, or Testament, as conditions, improperly so called, or as conditions in order preceding one the other, and as benefits of the same covenant : But seeing the word condition is of late grown so rampant, and overmuch perfumed with the Spiceries of Rome, I shall willingly let it lie, as that other term of merit, which in their first births were more innocent, and inoffensive, and shall rather call them as duties and qualities required in the new covenant by Christ, as necessary in all his redeemed ones to life and salvation ! And when I say they are duties necessary, I would be understood, not absolutely necessary, but *virtute precipit*, and *virtute mediis*, unto all such as are capable of their duties, but not unto Infants or Idiots, that want the use of reason ; for to believe and repent, are acts of the will and understanding, which Infants or Idiots are not capable of ; and therefore we exempt them from salvation, dying so, if the condition of faith was absolute and peremptory, as *Augustine* once dreamed, and therefore was called *durus pater Infantum* ; and all others must conclude the like harsh judgement on them also, that hold a true faith and repentance as absolute necessary conditions unto justification and life.

But again, If it were true what the Arminian says, That none are saved but on the condition of the *To credere*, or act of faith, and none damned but for unbelief ; then I re-assume, that some persons according to this, are neither damned nor saved ; for Infants dying such, as aforesaid, canhot have (by reason of their incapacity) the act of faith nor unbelief, which is a privation by re-

fusal or resistance of the truth made manifest: Indeed such absurdities do they incur, that assert such absolute conditions in the covenant of grace to be done on man's part; yet I say, they are absolute and peremptory on Christ's part to be performed, and he having fully finished all the conditions for his elect ones by his death (though some of them dying Infants) yet are laved by virtue of that everlasting covenant made with Christ, in, for, and on the behalf of all his chosen ones, of whom he will not lose one which the Father hath given him.

From this precedent discourse you may plainly conclude, that though I grant repentance a necessary Gospel duty, and for divers good ends it is ordained so, yet do not in the least place it in any subordinate causality, joynly with Christ, in the work of our salvation, but only as our duty, thorowfare, or way thereunto, commanded and instituted by Christ, as part of his new Law, that he himself might have the pre-eminence in all things, and the name and glory alone of our salvation. And this hereon shall suffice. See more herein v. 23.

Observe. 2. Another Note hence is, That the doctrine of judgments and threats, is a very useful Gospel doctrine.

When Christ hath passed with his doctrine of grace, and offers a reconciliation freely, if the sinner will but turn from his iniquities, and repent, and yet the sinner will refuse his gracious terms, he hath another burden to tell him, that after he hath refused so great salvation, he can cast both soul and body into hell fire: the most obdurate and incorrigible child must have the sharpest rod, a smile, or a love-token will work upon the ingenuous, but saith Solomon, *and is for the back of a fool.* Neither is judgement a strange work unto Christ; for as he is related unto his church, as a Saviour, and a Father, respecting his grace and loving kindness, so he is as well a Judge, and a Legislator, and so may justly chaste his church, as contemners and transgressors of his Royal Law. If he calls us to repent, which is part of his new covenant Law, as he did the church of Ephesus, and yet go on obstinately in sin, justly may he remove his candlestick from amongst us: If his Lamb-like quality of mercy and grace will not invite us to return, he can roar as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, which will cause us to call upon the mountains to fall upon us, and to hide us from the presence of the Lamb: wherefore they are much mistaken, that would shut out as useless, the doctrine of threats and judgements from the Gospel, which are to be preached soberly, and conditional, not peremptory and absolute; for if there were not a curb, and fear of loss and punishment, the wanton straying soul would hardly be reclaimed, though the more tender hearted the apprehension of grace and love might reclaim and mollifie.

Observe 3. Another Observation is, To take off God's candlestick, or to unchurch a Nation or people, is the most grievous of all God's judgements.

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Christ could not afflict the church of Ephesus with a greater loss, then to remove his church from among them: for hereby, First, Privatively, His glory and special presence of grace and favour is withdrawn.

Secondly, The guidance, light, and comfort of his holy Spirit is departed.

Thirdly, His Ordinances are all defiled and vanished.

Fourthly, His special protection is withdrawn also.

Fifthly and lastly, Instead of his gracious presence, they have his presence in wrath, judgements, and fiery indignations; Instead of his Spirit of light and comfort, they have the dismal spirit of darkness, error, and despair; instead of Christ's holy Ordinances, they have the Devil's sacrifices; and instead of God's special protection over them, they are carried captives by Satan to all foul and unclean lusts whatsoever. This is the most sad condition, when God does unchurch a people for their sins: witness the habitation of these seven Asian churches, wherein the Synagogue of Satan in Mahumatism and Heathenism is set up in the room of Christ's holy Doctrine and Ordinances, and all for their impenitency and obstinacy in their loud crying abominations: and therefore I cannot too often recognize this verse to backslidden souls, *Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I will come against thee shortly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

Verse 6. *But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

Christ goes on, and tells the church of Ephesus, that though she was justly faulty for her defection in her first love, yet she had this commendable point in her to be added unto her other commendable graces, That she abhorred the abominations of the Nicolaitans both in judgment and practice, which also was most hateful and abominable unto Christ himself. Now the Sect of the Nicolaitans, is all Ecclesiastique history testifies, took the denomination from *Nicholas*, a Deacon of Antioch; but whether he was their leader himself, or whether they falsely pretended him the first founder of their heresie, is disputable: Indeed *Irenaeus*, *Tertullian*, and *Epiphanius*, are of opinion, that he himself was their leader; yet *Clemens Alexandrinus*, and *Eusebius lib. 3.* do say, That the Nicolaitans had falsely pretended the name of *Nicholas* to their heresie, as *M. Baxter* asserts in his book of Infidelity, p. 132. However, we see their heresies were abominable; for Christ hated them: and their heretical practices and opinions consisted (as Antiquity testifies) under the name of christians, to hold and praise all manner of corporal obscenities and adulteries lawful, and all manner of spiritual fornication and idolatries also; and which they grounded on this wicked principle, That there was no difference

ence in good or evil, but only in opinion; and therefore took liberty to all sorts of wickednesses. And that these were chief heads of their heresies, is somewhat evident from verse 14, & 15. of this chapter, where the doctrine of Balaam and Nicolaitans are joyned and compared. Now we know, that Balaam's wicked doctrine was, *To lay a stumbling block before the children of Israel*, to entice them to offend God both in corporal and spiritual whoredom, in the busines of Baal Peor, that so by offending him, they might perish. *Numb. 25.* compared to *31. 16.* The Nicolaitans were this false Prophet's true disciples, and were true branches of the Gnosticks of old, who pretended strange and unknown high mysteries, and discoveries of light, which plain and orthodox christians never heard of; as many of the same spirit now a days pretend unto, on purpose to amuse the simple, and to draw them into the snare of Satan: and how well these filthy dreamers amongst us, do correspond with their elder Brethren, the Nicholaitans, compare the heresies and blasphemies of some of these times, with that description of the Nicholaitans, made by M. Baxter out of historical Antiquity, page 129. of his said booke of Infidelity: speaking of the Nicholaitans, whose inhumane filthiness (saith he) was such, and their divelish conceits so many and vile, that I will forbear to mention them; only this, They made themselves like Christ, and some of them to be equal to him, and some the same with him: That good and evil differed not in deed, but in mens opinions; they worshipped Images, they lived in such horrid ways in lust and filthiness, as is not to be named: *Epiphanius* himself unhappily fell in amongst them, and knew their ways from their own mouths and actions, but happily escaped when they would have drawn him to their lusts. They have multitudes of amazing words and notions, like our Behmenists, that would bring a man into a suspicion of witchcraft to read them: They used witchcrafts, and several sorts of enchantments, and kept devils in familiarity with them, that by their means they might encrease their knowledge and power, Thus far M. Baxter. And he professes afterward, that it is not one, nor two, but all church histories of those times, that makes mention of them, do say the same things; and if they will read *Epiphanius* himself, who once fell in amongst them, they will see much more. Having thus far described the Nicholaitans, and their heresies, in the next place take this Note.

Observ. That the more pure, sound, and undefiled the church is, the devil is most solicitous to raise heresies and schisms in it.

How busie the devil was in those Asian churches in the Apostles times, to bring in the foul heresies of the Nicholaitans, the doctrines of *Balaam* and *Jezebel*, if possibly he could, so to entice them to sin against their God, that he might have his purpose on them; but when the church became more corrupted, tyrannical, and antichristianized, under the headship of the Bishop of Rome,

Rome, their heresies were less, and their schismes fewer; then in the primitive purer times, for Satan would rather heretiate and poyson the whole, then a part; and indeed the devl has his designe accomplished, when he sees a church rushing onward to their own destruction, by the multitude of their corruptions; and amongst such, he hath no need to lay any of his stratagems of heresies and schismes, but only to let them in peace and security, and they will hasten on fast enough unto their own destruction: Therefore hence, unto me it is a good argument, that we have true and faithful churches of Christ amongst us, and that the true doctrine of the Gospel is sincerely preached and taught amongst our churches, or else Satan (the envious one) would not be so ready to sow also his tares of heresies and error, as he does at present amongst us, to overthrow (if he may) our hopes and harvest. It seems to me but a sad saying, when some Ministers affirm, they give thanks to God that their churches are not troubled with the heresies of the times: though I confess heresies are great evils, and to be fervently deprecated from all Christ's flocks; yet when they say they are all at peace, it is much to be feared, that there is another strong man keeping the house besides Christ; for, be sure when Christ comes to bruise Satan's head, he will bite Christ's heel; and no sooner is the man-child Christ born in the souls of his faithful ones, but the Dragon will presently send forth floods of water of heresies, errors, and persecutions, if possibly, to destroy both it and them, *Re. 12. 15.* and this proceeds from that everlasting enmity set between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the Serpent, even from the beginning, *Gen. 3. 15.* and will continue, until he be bound up in everlasting chains of darkness: and therefore the purer the church is, the busier will Satan be to undermine them if he may.

Observ. 2. Another Note is, That all heresie is defiling and abominable. Christ hates it, and his church hates it; and therefore surely it hath some poysonous and pestilential quality in it; sometimes it amouys so far, as to defile both judgement and practise joyntly, as it did in the Sect of the Nicholaitans: And this it most frequently does, unles in such a time, when the appearance of an Angel of light will seem better with Satans designs: for if the Theoretique part of the understanding be not sound, the pratique can hardly be streight; where the light of the eye is darkned, our feet will soon stumble: and the will and judgement are so linked together, that some make the will to be the last act of the understanding, or the pratique part of the judgement: so nearely they are related into onselfs, that the contagion of the one, will be the defilement of the other.

Yet secondly, Satan is so serpentine and crafty, that often he can restrain the will, and put on the forms of an Angel of light, and set on a stricter garb of holiness and mortification then ordinary, even unto an Eretnique monastical conversation, denying the

the lawful comforts of humane life and society, that he may make the greater impression to deceive thereby, as he does in some of the crafty deceiving heretics of these days: Therefore it is not only the duty of all Christ's faithful ones, but their honour, and glory, and their crown, to abominate and hate all such deeds and mysteries of Satan, even as they are abominated and hated by Christ himself.

Verse 7. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches: To him that overcometh, will I give to taste of the Tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.*

The ear is the chief instrument or organ by which we hear, and the Spirit sets it here metonymically for hearing it self; such a hearing or right understanding as is mentioned in Rom. 10. 17. as comes by the Word of God, by a sagacious and diligent prepecting of the mind of God in the word, stirred up and warmed by the influence of the same Spirit; and such a hearing, or such an ear, is here called, as competently fit for the comprehension of the mind of the Spirit in these prophecies. Hence Note,

Obseru. That there is chiefly required a spiritualized and enlightened reason, and a well ordered judgement, for the discovery of the mysteries of this book of Prophecies.

Holy and good affections, without sound knowledge, will not reach it. It is for him that hath understanding, that must count the number of the Beast, Rev. 13. 18. God hath given diversity of gifts to his Church, for the profit of the whole: some one is excellent for an interpretation of Tongues, another for Prophecy, another for exhortation, another for a Psalm, another for gubernation and discipline, another is excellent about justification, another about the doctrines of holiness and sanctification; others again are for unlocking prophetical deeps and mysteries &c. So every one hath their variety of gifts and excellencies, that the body may be compleated, and made perfect; by the co-assistance and harmony of the whole. Let it not seem strange, that this book is dark and difficult to the supine and lazie christian; it is only for *him that hath an ear, to hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*

What is meant by the Spirit that speaks unto the churches, is to be enquired into.

It cannot be understood, neither Angel, nor the holy Spirit, personally considered; for in the next immediate verse, the same Spirit is called the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive: Now this must be Christ, who appeared unto John, not in his humanity, but spiritually, in his Deity, under the figure and likeness of the Son of man. Review v. 13. of the first chapter, more fully to this purpose. And here he is called the Spirit, to denote

Obseru.

Obseru. That Christ is one and the same, not only in properties and qualities with the holy Spirit, but in essence also.

He hath the incommunicable properties of the Father in the words in the next verse, and precedent chapter, v. 4, 8, & 17. *who is the first and the last: In vers. 18. of this chapter, he is called, The Son of God; and in this verse, he is called, The Spirit: all making up this harmonious conclusion and truth, that Christ is one and the same, everlasting Father, Son, and Spirit, our God blessed for ever.*

Obseru. Another Note from these words are, That every wise and judicious christian, ought to be very intent and enquiring into the mind of God, in and about all his providential dealings and discoveries towards his churches abroad in the world.

What God speaks unto his churches, is not of a private interpretation, but of a publicke concernment unto all others. If God have dealt in judgement and righteousness with those Asiaticque churches, and for their abounding iniquities unrepented of, hath anathematized, and utterly unchurched them all; think not that we shall go free, if we be found in the same transgressions with them. There were other churches too, as well as these, once famous for their faith and piety, now become the dens of Dragons, and habitation of all unclean spirits: Therefore to avoid the stroke of divine judgements by a timely repentance, how behoveful and necessary it is for him that hath an ear, to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: For be sure, if we run the same course of sin with them, we shall drink the same cup of indignation with them also; If we continue obstinate, and repent not: for God is the same immutable Being, just, and righteous, and a hater of all iniquity, to day, and for ever.

But to him that overcometh, that is, holds out against the spiritual assaults of Satan, and so overcome his temptations, will I give (saith Christ) to eat of the Tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

Here we have the triumphant Christian Conqueror described, together with his Crown, and Reward: *To him that overcometh, that is, the Conqueror: The reward is, To eat of the Tree of life in the Paradise of God.*

But if it should be asked, wherein should a christian combatant overcome, to denominate him a true conqueror, and to overcome indeed?

I answer, As God hath furnished us with variety of spiritual weapons and armory from himself, which are mighty through God to pull down the strong holds of Satan; so we have divers and various stratagems, and wyles of his, to meet with in our christian warfare here beneath: we have not only to fight with our corruptions within, but we must meet with divers assaults of Satan also from without, enticements and allutements to false Doctrines and Worships: and if we comply not, we may be sure to meet

meet his buffettings from without, in revilings, reproaches, afflictions, &c. and often, as Paul did, fight with unreasonable and bestial men, as he did after the manner of Beasts at Ephesus: So that he that overcometh, to have right to the Tree of life, must go farther then overcome the assaults and temptations of Satan; as unto the breach of moral duties; but to denominate him a compleat Conquerour, he ought to have a special eye and regard unto Satan's more spiritual and refined designs and assaults, which lies as it were, against the very life of a christian, which he ushers in by false doctrines, and abominable heresies; which he lays as a stumbling block in the ways of God's children; as wicked Balaam did set a snare of Idolatry and Adultery, to make the children of Israel fall; that God might be wroth against them, and to judge them in his displeasure: So Satan sets up his standard under the heresies of the Nicolaitans, anti-Trinitarians, anti-Scripturists, idolatizing Antichristians, &c. that if possibly he can draw the faithful ones of Christ to comply with them, and to receive their marks in their hands and foreheads, then he hath the accomplishment of his designe, for, be sure destruction followeth speedily, as the consequence of such doctrines: So that he that overcometh the assaults of Satan, not only respecting life; but in doctrine also, is a compleat christian, and conquerour, and shall eat of the Tree of life, in the midst of the Paradise of God. Hence ariseth a Note.

Observe. To overcome, is the Christians crown. Or otherwise, Perseverance is a christians great duty. It is not him that hath begun well, that will obtain the Palm, but holds out his course in faithfulness: *Vincenti dabitur.* Many have begun in the spirit, and ended in the flesh, and so lost their reward. In a Race, he that leaves off at the first stage, have no hopes to obtain the Laurel: But that Traveller, or wayfaring man, that endures patiently the hardships of a long journey, with all the dangers, difficulties, and extremities, that ways, weather, and other accidents may offer, will at last doubtless attain to his much complacents place and period, whilsts the lazie one is deterred with the difficulty; and if not in the first days journey, yet in the mid-way, is resty, and tyred: It is not sufficient for us to endure and repulse a hash of two of Satans assaults, who is as a roaring Lion, night and day, going about, seeking whom he may devour. As he is restless in his temptations; so we must be restles in our defensive Guards and Repulses; our life is a constant warfare, and one errour committed in warfare, is remediless, and irrecoverable: And though I am far from asserting with the Novatians, That the errours or slips of the faithful are irreparable; and though the errours of humane works admits of no repentance, yet the errours of our christian warfare may be reinforced, and redeemed, by a returning unto a more strict and diligent watch upon our hearts and judgements; yet notwithstanding this, we may lose much of our comfort in the way,

way, and be accounted but as dastard soldiery by our Captain General, in that we have not kept close unto our Colours, and diligent and constant in all extremities, in opposing the assaults and invades of the adversaries; for to that very end, Christ, our Captain, hath set weapons into our hands, which are spiritual, and mighty, to oppose and overcome all the assaults, stratagems, and underminings of Satan: Besides, he hath laid it on us as our duty: *Strive to enter into the strait gate.* And, *The Kingdom of heaven suffers violence;* and 'tis the violent (not the lazie dormant one) takes it by force: So in this place, *To him that overcometh, to him is given to eat of the Tree of life,* (as his crown and reward) which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

In Rev. 22. 2. There is described, as an additament of the glory of the New Jerusalem, that new heavenly City or church estate, that came down from God, That in the midst of the street thereof, and of either side of the River, there was the Tree of life, which had twelve manner of fruits, and yelded her fruit every moneth, and the leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the Nations. Those that overcome the spiritual assaults of Satan, are promised to eat of this Tree, which is placed in this Paradise of God. As Paradise was the blessed habitation of Adam in his innocent and sinless condition; so it is put typically and figuratively both, for that blessed estate that the Saints enjoy now in heaven. *This day* (saith Christ unto the penitent Thief) *thou shalt be with me in Paradise.* Luke 23. 43. that is, thou shalt be in a blessed state and glory. Paul when he was rapt up in spirit into the third heaven, 2 Cor. 12. 4. he says how that he was caught up into Paradise, that is, into an incomparable glory. So that Paradise may very fitly signifie and represent figuratively unto us any state of glory, either in the supernal heavens, or that that is reserved for all God's faithful ones, after the re-union and resurrection of their souls and bodies at the last day: for God does make things known unto us by such things as we partly already know and understand. Now we know Paradise was presented unto Adam full of all delicacy and ornaments that the heart of man or his curiosity could wish for, and how it was replenished with all goodly fruits, not only pleasant to the eye, but very favourly unto the taste also; by sensible things God makes known his hidden mysteries, and spiritual delicacy, as unto the children of men: But here lies the difference between the first and second Paradise; The first Paradise had not only the Tree of life in it, as a reward, and a confirming Sacrament of Adam's eternal felicity, if he had continued obedient to the command of God; but it had also the Tree of knowledge of good and evil; a Tree, that when he should taste thereof, and make a breach of his obedience towards his God and his Creator, he should sadly experience, for himself and whole posterity, the bitterness of the fruit thereof; and so should come to know, by the sad event, what was good, and what was evil; how he had wronged

by disobedience, the chiefest good; and as his due reward and merit, is become liable and obnoxious to mortality, death, and all miseries that an infinite divine Justice can inflict upon him for his disobedience. Now in this second or last Paradice, there is no fear of eating the bitter fruits of the Tree of knowledge of good and evil; for there is no such Tree therein; this last is guarded with a surer Angel than that that guarded with a flaming sword at the entrance of the Garden of *Eden*: The Lamb (in this last) is the light and the glory thereof: The first *Adam*, the possessor of the first Paradice, was of the earth, earthly; but the second *Adam* is the possessor of this, whose Throne is in the midst thereof, and is of heaven, heavenly; Here are no conditions of life and death put upon eating, or not eating; here is only the Tree of life, which is prepared for the faithful conquerour in Christ's name, for the confirmation of their eternal happiness.

But it may be queried, what is meant by this Tree of life?

I answer, Some of the Ancients, as *Augustine*, and others, makes it to be Christ, whose leaves, that is (say they) his merits, is for the healing of the Nations. But saving due reverence to antiquity, I rather adhere to those that understand it a true and real Tree of life, as that in the garden of *Eden* was, for these reasons. For Christ being personally in this heavenly city, or new *Jerusalem*; for where should he be but with his Spouse, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, at that great and solemn day of triumph? And it is said, *Thus the Lamb is the Temple, and the light of this City*, cap. 21, 22, 23, and therefore evidently convincing, that he is not personally absent from her; and being with her, and present, I cannot see how congruous to reason it is to say or assert, that the glorified Saints shall eat of that Tree of Christ Sacramentally: For when we have the enjoyment of vision, faith ceaseth; nor is then any need of signs, figures, or Sacraments (the only way that we can eat Christ spiritually and mystically) in this heavenly Paradice; for being himself then and there present with his Saints, that Scripture will be fulfilled, whose authority is yet of force, and not at all as yet clapsed (as some would have it) to wit, *Math. 28. And lo, I am with you unto the end of the world*, or, of this generation: that is, Christ promises his presence of grace, efficacy, comfort, and support, unto the faithful dispensing of his Ordinances of the Word and Sacraments unto the end of this world, which consisteth in several series or courses of generations that shall succeed one the other, until the day *Star* shall arise, and radiate with a more incomparable glory, and set a period to all those present Ordinances we now enjoy, which are fitted to our present weakness and capacities, and restore us into the liberty of the Sons of God, and give us Ordinances of a more spiritual and higher key, fit for that new and glorious City, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, that comes down from heaven. And why may I not think that in this heavenly Paradice, this *Eden* of God and Christ, this *New Jerusalem*,

or

or New Heavens, and New Earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, according to 2 *Pe. 3.13.* shall have the Tree of life placed by God in the midst thereof, whose fruits shall shine as Sacraments of confirmation unto the blessed Saints, of the continuation of their glorious state and blessedness for ever; so that whether Christ be taken to be this Tree of life, or whether God shall set up in his celestial Paradice a real Tree of life, as formerly he did to *Adam* in *Eden*, yet both and either do evince this.

Ob. rv. That God hath secured the everlasting blessed estate of the faithful, by most evident Sacraments, and clear signs of his presence.

Sin cannot then hurt them, the devil is chained up in the bottomless pit, their adversaries have their portion also with him; so that there is none found to hurt in all the holy mountain. What greater security, when all fear of miscarriage is quite done away? No enemies appear from within, nor any from without; all are vanquished and brought under the footstool of the Lamb, that sitteth upon the Throne: Then it may be said, *O death! Where is thy sting? O grave! Where is thy victory?* And as if the treading under all enemies were not enough to secure this blessed estate, and make it compleatly happy, there is added the Tree of life, to eat thereof; not as if there were fear of death, but symbolically, sacramentally, hieroglyphically, or emblematically, to manifest and confirm the perpetuity and continuation of that most glorious and blessed state for ever.

But it may be objected, Is not Paradice taken in Scripture for the supernal heaven? and is it here to be taken thus? That *he that overcometh shall eat of the Tree of life, in the midst of the Paradice of God*; that is, shall be translated to the heavenly mansions above, where the Angels, and souls of the blessed remain in glory, and there shall eat of the Tree of life; that is, shall partake of Christ in his glory and eternal life, in the supernal heavens.

I answer, first Negatively; This Paradice that is given to the Christian conquerors, cannot be in this place, nor that of cap. 22. v. 28. whereunto this hath relation, and correspond both in sense and reason, be understood of the supernal heavens, for many reasons. First, Because in this Paradice it is said, There is the Tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the Nations: Now in the heavens above, there is no healing, or conversion, that must be done here beneath, or not at all.

Secondly, In the supernal heavens, there are neither Streets, nor Rivers, Gates, nor Foundations; as this Paradice is circumstantially described in chap. 21, and 22.

Thirdly, This Paradice is measured to a certain proportion, cap. 21. 15, 16, 17, &c. And how short that measure, being according to the cubits of a man, is to span or fathom the supernal heavens, let him that hath the least grain of reason judge.

Fourthly, It cannot be intended of the highest heavens, because

this Paradice or New Jerusalem is said to descend, or come down out of heaven from God, and that the Tabernacle of God is with men, and that he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people: Now how improper and dissonant from right reason is it to say, that the supernal heavens do descend and come down unto the children of men? And how needless is it for God to promise that he will be the God of his people in the highest heavens, and that he will dwell with them there? All know it is the place of his habitation, where his glorious presence is most eminent and resplendent.

Lastly, I answer positively, That this Paradice which is here promised to the faithful conquerors in Christ, is a Terrestrial Paradice: It is a heaven on earth, though not an earthly one: It is a holy City, a New Jerusalem, a New Heaven, and a New Earth, that comes down from God, cap. 21. 1, 2, &c. And if it be not on earth, what need is there of the mention of a New Earth? In the supernal heavens there is no place for the performance of such a promise, 2 Pet. 3. which place hath relation to that of Isa. 65. 17. where God promiseth the Jews New Heavens, and a New Earth; and withal there mentions, the enjoyment of Houses and Vineyards: and how these things can be attributed or consist in the supernal heaven, or how things there may be said to be meliorated, made new, or better then they are, passeth my reason to comprehend? Though withal I grant, That the supernal heaven may be represented by Paradice, as in that of Luke 23. 43. But more properly, The first Paradice may serve to typifie or represent the second Paradice, or new Church-state, or heaven, which Christ will restore unto his faithful ones, before the ultimate day, and end of all. See more on the 21, and 22 chapters.

Verse 8. *And unto the Angel of the Church in Smyrna, Write these things, saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.*

Verse 9. *I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty; but thou art rich: and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the Synagogue of Satan.*

Christ having finished his charge to the church of Ephesus, goes on on the same account with the church of Smyrna, and commands the Angel, or chief Pastor, or Minister of the said church, who (as Irenæus testifies) was *Policarpus*, Scholar unto S. John, to write those things for them to take notice of, which he was about to discover to them: The person that gave out these discoveries and charges to the churches, is here plainly manifested to be Christ, who was dead, and is alive, as in v. 18. of the precedent chapter more fully. The matter of the discovery is wholly of encouragement and approbation; *I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty;*

verity; but thou art rich: that is, I know thy works, thou church of Smyrna, and the trouble, affliction, and tribulation that thou endurest by reason of the opprobrious, scandalous, and reviling speeches which those cast out against thee, which call themselves Jews, and are not: And I know thy poverty, and scarceness in worldly riches; but I add withal, thou art rich in spiritual graces; and though thou art accounted poor in this world, yet thou hast treasures abiding for thee in heaven: And withal, I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the Synagogue of Satan: As if he had said, I also know and take notice of the reviling speeches that those which call themselves Jews (and so perhaps were so by blood) and yet are not true Jews, true spiritual Israelites, but rather by reason of their unbelief, and malicious practices, and persecution of the truth, and the professors thereof, are the very devil's disciples, and of the Synagogue of Satan: Here is a two-fold knowledge, or several acts of one and the same knowledge, and far different the one from the other: The one is a knowledge of approbation, love, and complacency, the other of hatred and abhorrence. Christ knows the works of the church of Smyrna, of her tribulation, persecution, and poverty, and loves her, and honours her for it. Christ also knows the works of her adversaries, of blasphemies, reproaches, and enticements to evil, against the true Professors of godliness; and not only hates them for it, but sets a character of ignominy upon their head for ever: for what may be more reproachful or stigmatizing, then for those that think themselves somewhat in the church of God, that call themselves Jews, the keepers of the Oracles and mysteries of God, yet indeed, to be justly numbered among the disciples of the Synagogue of Satan; that is, of the devil's church: for the word Synagogue, in the Greek signifies so much as Convention, Meeting, or Church, which is commonly used now in the worser sense, which was appropriated first, chiefly to the Jewish Pharisaical and Priestly meetings, and called the Jewish Synagogue; but Christians having renounced the name and thing, have appropriated to their meetings or conventions, a more significant name, to wit, the Church, *Ecclesia*; and leaves the Synagogue to unbelieving Jews, Antichrist, and the Devil, to nourish their Disciples in. From Christ taking knowledge, with approbation, of the works and tribulations of the church of Smyrna, see the Notes on v. 2. of this chapter, to which I refer. But from this verse explained, one Note shall be,

Observe. That a poor afflicted and persecuted church of Christ, is more dear, precious, and rich in his eye, then all other the potent, rich, and mighty Societies in the world.

Christ looks upon the latter, but with an eye of common providence, as the Sun shineth, and shower falleth on the field of the righteous and unrighteous alike; herein there is no distinction of love or mercy: God equally dispenseth those common gifts equally

ly alike unto all; neither is any one to be accounted godly or ungodly, elect or reprobate, from the abounding or want thereof; for some godly have abounded, and others have wanted herein: But the church of Christ, they have distinguishing mercies, their afflictions and tears are treasured up in a bottle of remembrance, for a reward and crown unto them: they are as the apple of his eye, his jewels, members of his mystical body, and therefore must needs be dear unto him; for no man ever hated his own flesh, for them the world was made, and is preserved and continued to this day for their sakes; and I dare be bold to affirm, if there were none of his elect members on earth, the world would soon see its night and period, and forthwith relapse to its primitive and everlasting chaos, or at least, pass away, and perish, that its place be no more found. Christ is still walking amongst those golden Candlesticks, viewing their order, and takes his delight in those Gardens, and Beds of Spices, and so gets up early into these Vineyards, to see if the Vine flourish; whether the tender Grape appear, and the Pomegranates bud forth, *Cant. 7. 12.* his delight was ever to be with the children of men, and takes much pleasure, not only in seeing and smelling the savoury exercises, and spiritual sacrifices of the more grown christians, but also takes much complacency in viewing the growth, production, and fruitfulness of younger christians, and leads them gently by the hand, by his doctrine and discipline, until at last they are brought unto the Wine-cellars of his love, where he bids them to take their fill of love; but by the way, comforts them with apples, and stays them with flaggons, till at last he bring them home unto himself, purified and cleansed by the purgatory of afflictions, and tribulations, as gold, seven times tryed by the fire of the Chymister. The genuine use of this is, to demonstrate the danger of persecution of Christ's members or churches, to all persons in the world. They are his members, and in as much as it is done to one of them, it is done unto himself; and better a millstone were hanged about the neck of such offenders, and cast into the Sea, than to offend one of his little ones.

The reasons that Christ's churches, though afflicted, scorned, or persecuted, are so dear and precious to him, are,

First, Because they are his Members, and it is most natural to love ones self; for he that loves not himself, cannot love another, and we are bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.

Secondly, Because of their graces and unction; we having received all of his fulness, grace for grace, and of the same anointing with himself, though in an inferiour measure: The same oyl that was poured on Aarons head, ran down to the skirts of his garments; so the same unction of the Spirit, that was poured on Christ, is, in some measure, poured on all his inferiour members, and therefore most dear and beloved to him. *Omne simile, gaudet simili.*

Thirdly,

Thirdly, By reason of Union, Christ and his Members being one, by a mystical and spiritual union, they must needs be more dear and precious to him.

Fourthly, and lastly; the great reason that Christ's Saints and churches are most dear unto him, is, In that he hath laid down his own most precious life for them: for greater love than this was never shown, in that he died for us, even whiles we were fighters against God, and enemies by evil works.

Obser. 2. Another Note is, That though the world looks upon the faithful distressed churches of Christ, as a broken, poor, and forsaken people, both in outward estates, and intelle&ctuals also, yet God sets another rate upon them, and accounts them rich, wise, mighty, comly, beautiful, and as the most accomplished people in the world.

Is not this a strange Paradox to the infatuated worldling? But it is not so strange, as true: Christ here calls his poor afflicted Smyrna rich; for she was rich indeed with spiritual graces, that their persecuting adversaries were ignorant of; she was rich in immortal Treasures, laid up for her service in heaven above, where moth could not corrupt, or thief break thorow and steal, which her blaspheming enemies never dream'd of; what wise worldling does think a poor afflicted christian wife? He looks upon him so far beneath himself, that from his Machiavilian plots and counsels, he tells the wife and prudent christian soul, — *Procul hinc, procul ste proph. m:* Yet God tells them plainly, That the wife of the world are taken in their own snare, whilst true wisdom is justified of her children: And, God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, &c. *1 Cor. 1. 27, 28, 29.* The wife of the world think themselves a wise, politique, and highly contriving Statists, when they have brought the Saints of God, and the whole world under their feet and subjection; but the Saints of God know no such wisdom, but that wisdom which is of God, the eternal Word, and Christ, who of God is made to us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that no flesh should glory in his presence. The great Potentates of the world think with their Alexandrian Armies (as a Torrent) to carry all before them; *Aliis,* they are deceived, there are others more mighty than they; the poor afflicted churches of Christ can do more with their prayers, and using their interest with God, than all the Armies in the world: they can pray for legions of Angels, and they are ready at their commands: Witness the host of Sennacherib, destroyed by an Angel at the prayers of Hezekiah, and *Isaias* the Son of Amos: *2 Cor. 12. 10.* How many heathen Armies do we read of in Histories, were defeated by the faithful prayers of the godly, or at least, their force diverted another way: A poor despised christian, *David* with a sling and pebble, can do more by the pray-

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sons of faith, then *Goliath* with his spear: Oh! how happy and fortunate were the Captains and Armies of this our Nation, whilst the prayers of the faithful in the land continued fervent for them? The Bowe and Sword of the mighty had then no power to destroy, for the presence of our God was in the midst of them, for a defence unto them in all their warlike undertakings. Oh therefore, ye sovereign Governours, take heed how ye offend these little ones of Christ, that they may not avert their prayers from you; make good your interest with Christ and his Saints, and be one with them in faith and prayers; then never fear the boisterous storms or waves that are emitted from the Pillars of Hercules to our Albion shores, which will prove but as the daylie surges that washes our rocks and clifts, and so dash themselves into froth, and vanish. Next, the gaudy Gallant of the times, thinks himself the most fair and comly of all God's creatures, and looks upon a sober and prudent christian, as a despicable creature in respect of his gay Worship, whilsts God himself sets another character upon both: The one is clothed with the white garments of Christ's righteousness, and is all fair with the beauties of holiness, whilsts the other is only covered and clothed with the excremental extravagancies and menstruositys of small, earthy, brutish, and despicable creatures, and at best, do serve but in the room of Fig leaves, to be somewhat more honourable badges of their sin and misery: it is a shame to glory in that which are the ever-living Ensignes of their sin and shame; and seeing the Lillies of the field do exceed even *Solomon* in his bravery, little reason to glory in those rags of ours. Next, the Glutton, that makes his belly his god, and fareth deliciously every day, conceives he hath a heaven on earth, and that the poor afflicted christian comes far short of his happiness, in that he hath not that fulness every day in the varieties of Viands, and Festivals, that he enjoys: But alas, this wretched *Dives* never considered, that a poor christian hath other food to eat then he ever knew of; he hath spiritual Manna, bread from heaven, and the wine of Paradice, that he is quite ignorant of, that he that eateth thereof, shall never hunger or thirst more. Lastly, the wisdom of the world looks upon the distressed disciples of Christ, as fools, wittols, and mad-men, and thinks them to be so indeed: But on the contrary, the judicious christian knows the wisdom of the world to be foolishness and madnes to purpose: for who but fools and mad-men, would perversly run on in the ways of destruction, as the wisdom of the world does prompt unto? Whilst Christ's faithful ones, though suppressed and broken by afflictions and tribulations, yet do walk in the way of life, and shine as Stars in the Firmament of their Churches and Graces.

Observe 3. That the sharpest persecution comes from such as are the highest pretenders to truth and godliness.

The Jews were such, that boasted much of their diabolical

cles, and priviledges from *Antony Duke*, & *John Hales*, & *John Foxe*, & *John Foxe's* *Book of Martyrs*, & *any* pretensions to the *Gospel of Christ*, and the primitive *Apostolical chyrches*, of *any* pretensions to the *Truth*: Witness their reproachful blasphemies, which consisted not only against Christ himself, but against his ministers also: They reproached him that he had a devil, and thereby Beelzebub the old his miracles, and cast out devils, yes, their malice was not only to him living, but reached him after his crucifixion and resurrection, that so possibly they could destroy or weaken the faith of his disciples, and withal, hinder the propagation of the truth: and to that end blasphemed, and raised almost false report concerning his resurrection, and affirmed, That his Disciples came and stole him away out of his Sepulchre, but that he was not indeed risen, as they affirmed, but was conveyed away closely by them, that he might be deified: And this the unbelieving persons Jews say unto this day. Their malice stops not here against the Head, but also falls foul upon his members and churches in succeeding ages: We see how maliciously they fall upon *Stephen* in *Act. 7. 59*, and how zealous *Saul* himself was, whilsts an unconverted Jew, against the Disciples at *Damascus*, *Act. 9.* What uproars did the Jews raise, and what provocations did they use, to incense the Magistrates and chief Governours against the Apostles and Disciples of Christ in every place and City? These Asiatick chyrches were not free of their clamours, or their invectives against the christian profession. *Paul* met them at *Antioch*, *Act. 13. 45*, and at *Iconium*, *Act. 13. 2. 19*, who stoned *Paul*, and at *The Iconical*, *Act. 17. 5*, and uproar was risen by the Jews by reason of him, at *Corinth* he was drawn before *Gallio* at the judgement seat, by the envy of the Jews, *Act. 18. 12*, and at *Ephesus* he found the same malicious dealings from the Jews, *Act. 19. 9*, he found some of the same Blasphemers there, that were in the church of *Smyrna* and *Philadelphia*, *Rev. 3. 9*, that spoke evil of that way of the christian faith before the multitude. *Ye*, *the very heathens themselves* were more friendly to the christians, then the Jews, the professed people of God; witness the entertainment of *Paul* amongst the *Athenians*, *Act. 17.* the carriage of *Gallio*, *Festus*, *Felix*; and *Agrrippa* towards him; *Pilate* a Roman Prefect, would wash his hands from the death of Christ, whilsts the Jews, the visible people of God, cryed out, Crucifie him. At *Malta*, amongst the Barbarians, *Paul* was almost deified, *Act. 28. 6*. But when at *Jerusalem*, and amongst the Jews, they would haue torn him to pieces, *Act. 21. and 23. 12*. O strange! That zeal perverted should so rage in fury against the truth of God, and his Christ. These Jews did not only occasionally oppose the faith of Christ, and the publishers thereof, but of set purpose, did go to every City and place where it was taught, for to oppose and suppress it if they could, else possibly they could not be so found in so vassous places and Cities, and at so far distance one from the other, doing their parts, and venting their malice against it.

T Object.

object: But some may say, That those that raised blasphemies in the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia, were not properly Jews by blood, but such as say they were Jews, and are not, but do lie, cap. 3. 9.

I answer, Indeed they were not worthy to be called Jews, who had many eminent privileges peculiar to their Nation, our Apostle Paul could boast that he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews, and Rom. 3. 1, 2. they had much advantage every way; chiefly, Because unto them were committed the Oracles of God, and the word of peace and reconciliation by Christ, was first to be preached unto them; then next unto the Gentiles, Mat. 10. 5. And indeed, they were not worthy of the name of Jews, that had such great and glorious privileges, and yet so availed unto the Truth.

Yet secondly, I say, they must needs be the same Jews, of the same blood and progenie that opposed, persecuted, and blasphemed Paul, and other true churches of Christ also, with those found blaspheming, reviling, and persecuting in Smyrna and Philadelphia, being so like one the other in their cursed practices.

But lastly I answer, Though they say they are Jews, yet indeed are not, for he is not a Jew that is one outward, but he is a true Jew, a true Israelite of God, that is one inward: It is not he that tals and boasts of his carnal privileges and birth-right, as from Abraham, and does not the works of Abraham, is a Jew, but such an one is a true spiritual Jew, that walks in the steps of faithful Abraham; but for those reviling persecuting Jews, they were rather to be termed Rabble-heads, and Barbarians, then Jews, for their circumcision was become unto them, by reason of their impieties and blasphemies against the truth, uncircumcision, and therefore not worthy to be called Jews: Just as a nominal christian, when turned antichristian, and a blasphemer and persecutor of the true profession of Christ, who will think him worthy of the name of christian? And though he arrogates to himself that name and Title, and says (as the Jews here did) he is a christian, who will not say unto him, he is not, but a lyar, and a Barbarian, or at best, an antichristian.

But if it were demanded, What were the blasphemies of those Jews, against the church of Smyrna and Philadelphia, &c.

I answer, as before, Doubtless their blasphemy was Bicornis, or two-fold: The one horn thereof strook directly at Christ. The other, at the churches, and his members. This appears by Acts 19. 9. when Paul preached in the Jews Synagogues Christ and his Doctrine, divers were hardened, and believed not, but spoke evil of that way before the multitude. First, They would blaspheme the Master, and say, that he was a deceiver, and cast out Devils by Beelzebub, and a destroyer of their Laws and Customs which they had from Moses: And next, That his Disciples and Followers were seditious, and perverters of all Magistracy and Governments; and also amongst themselves unclean, using promiscuous lusts,

lusts, as the Nicolaitans were, denying the holy Laws of God, so by these Diabolical artifices, to bring them into contempt with the whole world, and so under the rod of persecution and tribulation. See the charge of Tertullian, the Orator of the Jews, against Paul, Acts 4. 5, 6, &c. tending partly to this effect: and the Jews perceiving the heresies of the Nicolaitans, Gnosticks, and others, of like unclean practices, to creep in among the churches, were bold to reproach them, as all such, and of the same unclean judgements and practices with the former. Consider the words of Epiphanius to this purpose, out of M. Baxter's book of Infidelity, page 131. Which sort of men (says he) Satan seems to have fitted, and sent for a reproach, and stumbling block to the church of God; and having put on themselves the names of christians, that for their sakes the Nations being offended, should abhor the profit of the church of God, and should refuse the truth declared to them, because of their savage wickedness, and incredible vileness; that I say, their frequent vilanies being taken notice of, they might persuade themselves, that those are such, that are of the holy church of God, and so may turn away their ears (as I said) from the true doctrine of God; or at least, beholding the dishonesty of a few, might cast the same reproaches upon all, &c. These doubtless were the advantages that the Jews took, to blaspheme the churches of Christ with, and so to make Christ's doctrine and followers seem abominable, whiles some that were called christians, were truly and worthily abominable. This artifice and method Satan keeps still afoot to this day, to vilifie Christ's Truth's, and his followers, by terming their doctrines Novel, and new Lights, though of above 1600 years standing, and of Apostolical Institution; and if they prove faithful Assertors of it, are presently termed factious, or Schismatical for it, being (as they say) Disturbers of the National Peace, perverters of Customs, Laws, and Governments, and forthwith branded with Anti-magistratical, and Anti-Ministerial Titles; as if they were against Magistracy; when they say in the first place, Fear God; in the next, Honour the King: Or if they were against all Ministers, because they are against the formal, lazie, and belly-god Priests, whose very forms, as carnal ordinances, are perished with using, and in the room thereof, desires a Ministry, sound, able, godly, efficacious, spiritual, and more edifying in the assemblies and churches of Christ.

In the next place, if any defection happens in the churches of Christ, as if some among them turn loose Nicolaitans, or the like, there will not be wanting the Nominal Jews, formal christians, to blaspheme them, as if they were all of that feather. The Papists, as soon as they heard of some heresies broken forth among the Protestants, presently cry out, and blaspheme the whole name of Protestants, as if they were all of that heretic. Among the old Episcopal men of our Nation, it was a common saying, That a

Geneva Presbytery made a fair gap, and was a downright way to Brownism and Anabaptism, as M. Hooker's Preface to his Ecclesiastical Policy manifests. And if any Non-conformist turned Anabaptist or Brownist, presently they would say the Presbyters were all such: And again, if any Independent, or Baptist now a days, became a Familistical Quaker, or Antiscripturist, presently the Presbyters lay the same harsh judgement and contumely upon the whole churches of the same profession, to render them abominable in the eyes of all; as if the eleven Apostles were all Judases, because one in twelve was a Judas. This Satanical method should be quite laid by, by such as have truly learned Christ. This was the old Jewish trick and stratagem, against the primitive precious Asiatic churches of Christ, who were not all Nicolaitans, because some Nicolaitans were crept in among them, but precious in the eye of God, both for their graces, and sufferings for the testimony of Jesus. But for such as will blaspheme the true doctrines of Christ, and the Professors thereof, by means of the evil among them, and to cast a reproach, tribulation, and affliction thereby upon them all, let them too withal not be discontented to read their judgement in this verse, *Whiles they say they are Jews, and are not, but are the Synagogue of Satan.*

Observ. 4. The last Note from these words shall be, That a mis-led zeal, is both dangerous and pernicious.

Little did the Jews think that they were fighting against the God of heaven, when they were persecuting and blaspheming the Professors of Christ: Nay, they do it, and think as *Paul* in his ignorance, that they do God good service in it: If our zeal be not commixt with sound knowledge, instead of promoting the glory of God, we may do the downright work of Satan. These poor Jews had an indubitable aim and zeal to glorifie God, for so *Paul* bears testimony of them, *Rom. 10. 2.* but it was exercised amiss, in that it was not according unto knowledge; if their judgement had been rightly informed, or bore the least proportion with their zeal, they would not persecute the disciples of Christ from city to city, and from Town to Town, much less put the Lord of life to death amongst them. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.

Use. Christians now adays should look to it, lest they go about to do the work of Satan, when they blaspheme and persecute all others that are differently minded from them in some particulars: They may call themselves christians, but are not; for it favours not of a christian spirit, which is ready to cover and heal the infirmity of his christian brother, not to revile, or cast a rancour on it, to Gangrene it, which is the work of Satan: Though I am not for the least toleration of evil or heresie in the church of Christ, yet I would have all to take heed, how they blaspheme, persecute, or speak evil of that way or practise, which has the vifible stamp of Christ upon it, though at present, by reason of some clouds of ignorance over them, they cannot plainly discern the truth of it:

it: In this case, the counsel of *Gamaliel*, *Acts 5.* is very seasonable; *Refrain your selves from these men, and let them alone; for if their work be of men, it will surely come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot destroy it, lest ye be found even fighters against God.*

Verse 10. *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; Behold, the Devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tryed; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

I know (says Christ) the tribulation and affliction that will overtake thee, O church of Smyrna, yet fear none of those things which shall come upon thee: Neither art thou to suffer only the reproach and blasphemy of the tongue, but also the devil shall so far prevail against you, as by his instigation, that the Tyrants of the world, and your malicious enemies, shall so far persecute you, and cast some of you into prison; but comfort ye, it is not for your destruction, but only for the tryal of your faith and constancy to your christian profession: and your tribulation is not for a little space, but to continue ten days, that is, ten years, that answers ten prophetical days; or rather I understand it, ten days of tribulation shall pass over you, to wit, the ten great primitive persecutions, the first whereof began against the christians under *Nero*, and the tenth under *Dioclesian*; yet however, this long and tedious persecution reach thee, yet leave not thy constancy, but be thou faithful unto thy Lord and Saviour, though their persecution be so high and fiery, as to make thee to taste the tortures of death for thy faith, yet be thou a faithful witness to me in that death, and thou shalt be crowned, as a reward of thy faithfulness, with the glory of eternal life.

Observ. 1. From the words is, God never lets the devil loose to raise tribulation or persecution against his churches, but he gives them first a cordial, a preparative, and strength from himself, that they may not sink under it, though they may suffer by it.

Before the ten great days of persecution fell on the primitive Asiatic churches, Christ tells them; Fear not those things which ye shall suffer, though imprisonments, and death it self attend you; for it is only for your tryal, and that your faith may be more apparent, by your constant Martyrdom, in the face of all your adversaries; yea, it is the way and method that Christ builds his Church by, by the way of the cross and sufferings. *Sanguis Martyrum, semen Ecclesiae;* The Martyrs blood was God's seed-plot of his Church and Truth. There is no promise that God's Saints shall be freed from Tryals, but there is a faithful promise that they shall not sink under it; for, he will lay no more on them, then they are able to bear: If God calls any to witness his truth by tribulation and persecution, he gives them hearts of courage, and constancy

stancy to bear it; he administers suitable strength unto the temptations; the strong in faith have stronger tryals then the weak, yet both are preserved by a divine supply and influence, that neither perish under them. *Peter* is desired by Satan, to be winnowed as wheat, yet *Peter* shall be still *Peter*, a Rock; for Christ hath prayed for him. *Job* is given into the hand of Satan to be touched in al that he has, and is dear unto him, yet *Job* by this means is preserved and made an everlasting example of faith and patience to all generations to come. The devil receives less by afflicting Christ's churches, for they grow the better for it; as Gold by the Refiners fire, loses its dross; so the Saints are more resplendent in their graces in the times of sufferings, and less corrupt and earthly, then in prosperity, as these and former days witness. The worst that the devil can cast on them, is death; and that is gain unto them, and an entrance unto a crown of life.

Observ. 2. Another Note is, That wicked tyrannical men, in the imprisonments and persecutions of the Saints of Christ, are said to do the work of the devil.

We well know, that the devil himself did not cast those poor persecuted Saints of Smyrna into prison, but they were divellish and wicked men, who were as the Instruments of Satan, to do his work, and set his designs in execution. O sad to consider! When men open their mouths against the Saints in blasphemies and reproaches, their mouths are only Satans Organs, that he belches out his malice by: when they lift up their hands against them, in loading them with persecutions and tribulations, they are but Satans wheels, whereby he moves and acts all his vilanies, yea, and are called Satan himself. Consider seriously this, all ye that lift up your tongues and hands against the Saints of God, and tremble.

Observ. 3. Another Note is, God's ends, and the devil's, are far different in laying afflictions and tribulations on the Saints.

God's end is, That they may be tryed, not destroyed; as gold is cast into the Refiners fire, that it may come forth more purified, so God's Saints are cast into the fire of tribulations, that they may be purged from their dross, kept closer, and more undefiled unto him, then before: The devil's end is, that they may not only be broken under affliction and tribulation, (and therefore he is termed Apollyon, a Destroyer; because he delights in the destruction and ruine of the godly) but also he aims and intends thereby, to vilifie the truth of God, and if possibly he can, to bring the Professors of the truth, by heaping afflictions on them, to impatience, and become wayward towards God and his truth; and as *Job's* wifes advice was unto her husband, to bring him unto a desperate condition, to curse God and die. This is Satans designe in afflicting the godly, either that they thereby may become Dastards, and Apostates unto the Truth, that both the truth and godly may be vilified and scandalized, or else, that they may provoke God by

by their foolish, wayward, and impatient carriage under it, and so provoke God to become their adversary, and to chattle them for it. Satan doth indeed desire to winnow us as wheat, but sure for our good, not to cleanse away our Tares and darrer from us, but to destroy us, and undo us if he may; but our comfort is, Christ hath prayed for us, that we shall not fail; but hath given us also spiritual weapons, to oppose his fiery darts, and to silence the Tempter in all his soul destroying temptations for ever. God desires by afflicting us, to try our faith, and keep us closer to him, that so we may become his approved children, as it is in *Heb. 12. Deut. 8. 16.* Satan is on another pin, he desires thereby to draw us further from God, and God also from us, if he may, by provoking him against us by our untoward carriage under the rod. O Lord, lay no more on us, nor give power to Satan to touch us, farther then thou hast given us strength and ability from thy self to resist, or bear with patience, and so we pray, Lead us not into temptation.

Object. But some may say, God tempteth no man, according to *1sa. 1. 13.* How then say you, that God tempts, and the devil tempts?

I answer, First, Indeed God that is the Author of all good cannot be the Author of evil, as evil is a sin, and an obliquity to his holy and righteous Laws, for he is God, and unchangeable holiness it self, and therefore he never presents seductions, or motions to sin. This is the proper work of Satan, and their own lusts, and far from the nature of the unchangeable holiness of God.

But secondly, God tempts, as temptation is taken for tryal, and so tries the obedience and faith of his children, by divers temptations and afflictions, as he did *Abraham, Moses, &c.*

Object. 2. But again you will say, Does not God in his inevitable Decrees and Providences, cast us necessarily upon the objects and temptations unto sin, therefore may be said to be author of them, and to tempt thereunto.

I answer, It was God's providence that the wedge of gold lay in *Achan's* way: and it was the purpose and decree of God from everlasting, that *Judas* should betray his innocent master; and it was by God's providence that *Bathsheba* was presented naked to *David's* eye, yet this doth not at all make God the author of sin, nor render *Achan, Judas, or David*, the less culpable for their sins; for God's secret Decrees, and providential dealings with, and towards his creatures, are no rules of duty unto us, nor render us more excusable for our failings; for God does neither enforce our wills, either physically or morally, by urging or inclining them to act in sinful ways, or by counselling or persuading thereunto; for that (as I said before) is against his holy Nature, and so tempteth no man; but when we are drawn aside, it is by our own lusts and concupiscences, God is free from the charge thereof, otherwise then as the Sun that casts his efficacious beams

on a stinking dunghill, makes it send forth unsavoury vapours; the nearest cause is the intrinsique corruption of the dunghill, the Sun is only a more remote cause, he only sends forth (as it were) his providential heat, whereby the dunghill is enflamed, and so sends forth from its corrupted womb, most unwholesome stenches and savours: So God emits his comfortable beams of providences towards us, spreads our tables with good things, and our own base lusts make them a snare unto us; presents us with objects of Beauty, as a remedy against sin, and our base hearts and lusts makes them occasions to sin: God gives us the fruit of the Vine to cherish us, and we turn them to drunkenness. The providence of God disposes riches and honours on us for good ends, and we employ them on our lusts, usurpations, and grinding the poor. All the creatures of God are in themselves good, physically considered, and we tacitely reflect on God as the author of our sin, when we lay the blame of our sins on the occasions thereof. Women, wine, riches, honours, are excellent creatures of God, and for singular uses and comforts unto men, but the occasions that are taken thereby to sin, rise not from any innate quality in those objects, for they all are good; but from the lusts of the heart of man; consider that of 2 Pet. 1. 4. The corruption that is in the world through lust: the world is the object, lust is the cause. The reason that men are covetous, effeminate, voluptuous, drunkards, sensual, &c. is not in riches, gold, wine, women, &c. but in mens most corrupt and naughty affections and dispositions of heart, which does, as the Spider or Toad by their own corrupt natures, turn the extraction of the sweetest flowers into poison.

Object. But again, doth not many Scriptures say, that God tempteth man? As Gen. 22. 1. God tempted Abraham, God tempted, or moved David to number the people, 2 Sam. 24. 1. God stirred up Pnt King of Assyria to carry away the Jews captive 1 Chron. 5. 26, and also Psal. 105. 25, he turned their heart to hate his people, and to deal subtilly with his servants. Thus also 1 Kin. 22. 22. Thou shalt be a lying spirit, go forth, and do so, and thou shalt prevail. It is also said Rom. 1. 26, 28. that God delivers over to a reprobate sense, and to send strong delusions, 2 Thes. 2. 11. It is said of Joseph, Gen. 45. 5. 8. speaking to his Brethren, Be not grieved nor offended, it was not you that sent me hither, it was not you, but God. Or that, Is there any evil in the City, but God is in it? Amos 3. And many other places say, That God delivered Christ to be bruised and afflicted by his unbelieving enemies, which was an evil act. Therefore from those, and the like places it may fully be objected, that God tempteth to evil, and hath a hand in sin and iniquity.

I answer, First, We must be careful to distinguish between temptations that are in themselves simply sinful, and those that are not so: God may justly try the faith of Abraham, by calling him

to sacrifice his only son *Isaac*, for he is the God and Maker of the whole Creation, and therefore without any injustice or sin, can call for the life of any of his creatures. God can lay afflictions on Job, and who can question his righteousness for it? God can chastise the church of *Smyrna* with ten days of tribulation, and who shall lay any thing to his charge? Tryals and temptations on this account, are not simply evil, neither are they absolutely to be deprecated, but with a submission unto the Will of God; for though no affliction at present seemeth joyous, but grievous, yet the fruits thereof are eternal life: If our judgement were rightly enlightened, we would not look upon the afflicting hand of God, or his tryals by the cross, a bitter thing, considering the happy effects and consequents thereof, even mortification of sin, and a crown of eternal life. If God comes with sharp corrections and Tryals on us, be sure we have strong corruptions to be mortified, and if we are called to great tryals, our hopes are the greater, and more sublime; and indeed, a faithful christian is of that heroick spirit, that he can look upon all the sufferings of this present world with an eye of contempt, and not worthy to be compared with the joys that shall be revealed, and so with *Moses*, can esteem the reproach of Christ, better then the treasures of *Egypt*; and so often on this score, God tries his children, and this is for their bettering, not for their worse.

But secondly, I answer, When ye read that God moves or tempts to that act that is sinful, it is either permissively, or judicially most commonly understood; as when God moves David to number the people, it was on God's part both permissively, and judicially: for, *the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David to number the people*, 2 Sam. 24. 1. God suffered it, and that judicially, but Satan did it maliciously, and destructively: God suffered, Satan tempted; God judicially permitted it, Satan executed it: for it is said 1 Chron. 21. 1. *Satan stood up, and provoked David to number the people*: So it was a judicial act of God, to stir up Pnt of Assyria to carry away a rebellious people (the Jews) into captivity, 1 Chron. 5. 26. God only permits the lying Spirit to go forth to deceive Zedekiah, 1 Kings 22. and so permits the Egyptians to deal deceitfully with his people the Jews, Psal. 105. 25. that thereby, he might rise in judgement against them: And where it is said, that God delivers over to a reprobate sense, to harden the heart, to blinden, or send strong delusions, God does it most justly and judicially to punish evil with evil, administers occasions of sin, that the sins of the obstinate may be heightened and aggravated, that their judgements may be the greater; and in the case of Joseph, that was wickedly handled by his brethren, yet it is said, that God sent him into *Egypt*, and there is no evil done in the City, but God is said to do it; yea, if it be rebellion it self, as 1 Kings 12. 15. First, God pre-ordains it, intends, and appointed it should be. Next, He permits it, and that noe by an idle permission,

mission, but by an efficacious permission: then he disposes the events thereof to his own glory, according to his pre-ordained purposes and decrees. And lastly, God is said to deliver Christ, to bruise and afflict him; that is, God pre-ordains him to that end, and hinders it not, but permits it, by a providential assistance and co-operation, by which every physical action of the creatures comes to pass; for, in him we live, move, and have our being.

Object. But then it seems you make God to have a great hand or efficiency in and about sin.

I answer, There would be no sin, if God had not given the commandment; If there were no Law, there were no transgression; neither is it beside the Will of God, nor against his Will; for if it were, then he were not God omniscient, or omnipotent: neither can we, without a continued concurrence and supportation of providence, produce any action or work of ours, wherein there is sin; and therefore God has an agency, and concurrence in the action wherein sin is, but not in the sinfulness of the action: as the Sun that emits his efficacious beams upon a dunghill, yet it self is undefiled from the corruption of the dunghill; so God that has his hand and efficiency about sin, is far from mixing with the obliquities of the creature; neither can he be said to be the direct author of it, nor the next proper cause thereof; sin is only a moral being or entity, and it hath subsistence alone in our corrupt natures; but all our physical actions are good, wherein God hath a concurrence, and they become ill, or sinful, by our own depravities; and so the devil, and our own lusts, are the mixt proper authors and fountains of all sin: So, let God be justified, and all men layars.

Secondly, Yet I say, God hath his hand and efficiency about sin, several manner of ways; and for distinct method sake, I shall briefly set them down.

1. God foresees, and pre-ordains it, else, as I said, it could not come to pass, seeing God is omniscient, and omnipotent, to hinder it if he would, *Acts. 2. 23.* Christ was delivered by the fore-knowledge, and determinate counsel of God: What was a greater sin, than betraying the innocent, and that too, the Saviour of the world? Yet this was pre-ordained of God, and he meant to draw excellent good out of it: and *Gen. 15. 19, 20.* Joseph tells his brethren, *As for you, ye thought evil, but God meant it for good, to bring it to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

2. God permits it. God's Decrees imply a necessity, that sin shall be, but do not impel or entice thereto: We being left to our free choice, God is not bound to hinder us; he suffered them to walk in their own ways, *Acts 14. 16.* and we being left unto our own choice, without God's special grace, we are sure to chuse the worst part.

3. God hath his concurrence in every action wherein sin is, but not

not in the obliquity of it; all our actions and motions are from God, but the sinfulness thereof is from the lusts of the heart of man.

4. God withdraws his preventing Grace, or suspends it from a sinner, for God is not bound up to Laws and conditions unto us, and he may do it out of Sovereignty, and he will do it, sometimes in wisdom, to try us, and see whether we will seek after him, and keep close unto him, as he did to *Hezekiah, 2 Chron. 33. 31.* God left Hezekiah, that he might know what was in his heart: So sometimes he withdraws his grace in Justice and Judgement, *Psal. 81. 12.* *I gave them up to their own hearts lusts, and they walked in their own counsels.*

5. God gives a concession and permission to wicked Instruments to stir up and move to evil, as *1 Kings 22. 22.* *I will go forth, and be a lying Spirit in the mouth of Abab's Prophets: And God said, Go forth.*

6. God wisely disposes his Providences, that they become a snare unto the sinner, and yet no dishonour to God; for his acts of Providences are in themselves good, and are rather motives to holiness and duty, if our hearts were sound, then temptations to sin; yea, his very mercies will become unto them a snare, *Psal. 69. 22.* *Let their Table become a snare, and their Welfare a Trap.* A sinner (like the Sea) will make all it receives brackish, though ever so sweet that runs into it.

7. God's hand is conversant about sin, as some of his judiciary punishments that he afflicts the sinner with, as *Rom. 1. 26. 2 Thes. 2. 11.* *God gave them up to vile affections, and gave them strong delusions: When we leave God and his ways, justly may he give us up to our own lusts and perverse ways, in a Judiciary way, and to a reprobate sense.*

8. God limits sin: Thus far thou shalt go, and no farther, *Psal. 76. 10.* *The wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder thereof shall thou restrain:* So far as God gets glory by the permission of sin; God will let the sinner take his swing, but it shall not exceed its bounds, but can presently destroy it, or stop the current of it in an instant: And so the remainders of wrath thou wilt restrain.

9. God disposes the events and ends of all sin to his glory. God would never permit sin, if he could not bring good out of it, *Rom. 3. 7.* Adam's sin (as one wittily said) was a happy sin; because it made way for the grace of God to be more clearly manifested unto the creature: Many of God's attributes would never be so clearly advanced, if it were not for sin; to wit, his mercy in pardoning, justice in punishing, wisdom in ordering, power in over-ruling it: Let us never therefore murmur against God for pre-ordinating and permitting sin; for though the wages thereof be death, yet thanked be God, we have victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Obseru. 4. Another Note from the words, *The Devil shall cast some of you in prison*, is, *That it is the Saints great comfort, to know that their imprisonments and afflictions comes from Satan and his wicked instruments.*

Saint Peter's rule was, *1 Pet. 4. 15. Let none of you suffer as an evil doer.* The comfort of sufferings will be quite abated by the guilt of sin: neither must the Saints sufferings be voluntary, and out of choice; for unto such it may one day be said, *Who required these things at your hands?* There must be a just call unto afflictions that must make them comfortable to us: It is but a fond presumption, to cast our selves upon imprisonments and tribulations, Satan and his wicked instruments will be apt enough to do it, and in that we may truly rejoice, that Christ hath thought us worthy to be Martyrs to his Truth, *Acts 5. 41. Matth. 5. 12.* and hath given us so sure and strong a token of our Interest in him, together with a sight of that glory of our interest, which we then under that condition must virtually and strongly enjoy in him by faith; but such are very fond, that will desire to fall into imprisonments and tribulations out of an affection to Martyrdom, as many of the Quakers of these days do: and Christ hath taught us to pray, *Lead us not into temptation;* and this had not been taught us, had it not been grievous and evil to fall into it, whether it were either the temptation unto sin, or temptation of affliction or the cross; for Christ himself prayed when his soul was troubled within him, *Father, save me from this hour;* and, *Let this Cup pass from me,* *John 12. 27.* though Christ submitted to the will of his Father, and freely chose death and sufferings, as our Mediator, yet as a private person, he would manifest the same afflictions that are in us, and deprecate the evil of sufferings, if possibly he could: Therefore for us to desire or rush into them, would be a mad-zeal, and irregular, and not according to sound knowledge: but if we desire to wait on God sincerely, and live godly, we need not fear of want of persecution or tribulations; for that is the common lot of all that will live godly in Christ Jesus; for Satan is the great contriver and promoter of it.

Obseru. 5. From the words, *And ye shall have tribulation ten days.* Note, *That the afflictions of Gods people, are but for a definite time and season.*

The tribulation that passed over the Church of *Smyrna*, was but for ten days; that is, ten prophetic days, or years, as some will have it: But I rather should understand ten days, to be ten times of persecution; for it is to be observed, that days in Prophetic writings, do signify times, as well as years: as in that of *Dan. 4. 29. Seven times shall pass over thee;* and in verse 31, it is tendered, *And at the end of these days,* *11. Net when he awoke up mine eyes to heaven,* *Rev. 12. 6.* compared to verse 14. So that the highest pitch of Tribulation that should happen to the Church at *Smyrna*,

Smyrna, should be the ten great days or time of persecution that should befall the Churches of Christ under the Kingdom of the red Dragon, the Heathenish Emperours. Seventy years were appointed to the Jews captivity of *Babylon*: And the longest day of tribulation that is to pass over Gods church, that I read of in Scriptures, is but a thousand two hundred and threescore days, or two and forty moneths; or a time, times, and half a time: therefore the time is certain, fixed, and determinated in the council of God, that the godly may have hopes to support their spirits, and not faint under tribulations or afflictions, for their Deliverer will come, and will not tarry.

Ques. But here you may demand, why this innocent church of *Smyrna*, wherein the Spirit could find no guil, nor had any thing to lay unto her charge, but on the contrary, was very eminent in graces and sufferings for Christ's name, should be so afflicted with so sharp tribulations, and how the Justice of God can be vindicated in this particular.

Ausw. First, I say, This doth not at all derogate from the Justice of God; for he doth not afflict his children as a Judge, *de merito*, for the guilt of sin; for that is already done upon the Surety: but he does it in wisdom, as a loving father would do unto his childe, keep him under the rod of correction, to prevent him from running into future evils: and so God deals here with the *Smyrnians*, that they may be tryed, that is, refined from their dross, and become more purer metall.

Secondly, God seeth or judgeth, not as man judgeth. We see nothing publickly laid to the charge of the church of *Smyrna*, but is set forth as one of the most eminent and fairest of the seven Sister churches, both for faith, piety, and sufferings; and worthily too she did deserve it in the eye of all: yet God could foresee that she would turn wanton and prodigal as well as the rest, and that she had the same heart of corruptions within, as the others had, and therefore had need of the rod of correction, to keep her childe to Christ: And this in few Ages did appear by their iniquities, whereby their candlesticks were removed from amongst them.

Thirdly, When God chastises and afflicts his children, it is not to be look'd upon as an act of Justice, but of Grace. *To you is it given to suffer*, saith *Paul to the Philippians, 1. 29.* It is an act of honour and service, when we are singled out to be Martyrs for the Truth of Christ before men and Angels. And hence the Primitive Saints, *Acts 5. 41.* *They went away rejoicing, that they were accounted worthy to suffer for Christ.*: Yea, they think themselves Bastards, and not beloved childe, if God chastens them not: It is God's rod, as well as staff doth comfort them.

Fourthly, Another reason that God afflicts his most innocent children, and the godly; is, The Truths of Christ are more propagated

pagated thereby. What though the godly should suffer death, that is but gain unto them, and the church also gaineth by it: for the enemies of Christ seeing their patience and fortitude, have been often converted to the Christian faith, as Antiquity testifieth, *Sanguis Martyrum, semen Ecclesie*. Just as an Oak that liveth by its own wounds: The more blood of Christians was spilt in the primitive days, the more they were multiplied. The church was first founded in the blood of Christ, and it thrives best when they fulfil the remainder of the sufferings of Christ in their own bodies: Therefore think it not strange, nor against the Justice of God, when he casts his children into divers tribulations.

Lastly, God does afflict his best children to try them. The ordinary strokes of God's providence, as losses, crosses, sicknesses, and the like, are more properly corrections than trials. Corrections great end is, either to mortifie sin, or to keep from sin; and to that end, God often takes the rod of affliction and correction into his hand: But Tryals that God sends us by Satan, or his Instruments, aim chiefly at the discovery and maintenance of our graces; and therefore when such befall us, they bring more inward comforts and experiences with them than ordinary crosses of Providence, according to that of 2 Cor. 1.5. *For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also consolation aboundeth by Christ.* These are the two ways that God carries his Saints unto a crown of eternal life: They must be first hewen, before they will make fit stones for the building of the New Jerusalem: Gold must pass thorow the Refiners fire, before it come unto its perfection. Tryals, and the Cross, though not meritorious for heaven, yet are Antecedents thereunto: It is thorow much tribulation that we must enter into the Kingdom of God; for we have much dross and sin within us, to be cleansed from us, before we shall be made meet for the inheritance of the Saints in light, Col. 1. 12. And this work is much promoted by afflictions, which makes us more heavenly, and meet for the communion of Saints: For, *before we were afflicted (as David) we went astray*, but since, we have cleaved close to his commandments: Wherefore when we enter into divers tribulations, let us not judge, that God hath done it in wrath and judgement, but rather as a gracious father, either to wean us from sin, preserve us against sin, or to approve and improve our gifts and graces: Under Tribulations, sincere graces are distinguished from gilded or hypocritical, true faith from a feigned faith, and the strong from the weak. Here is the patience and faith of the Saints in their highest glory, and in their greatest fragrance; therefore I conclude in S. James words, cap. 1. 2. *My Brethren, count it all joy, when you fall into divers temptations.*

Observe. From the words, *Be thou faithful unto the death, and thou shalt have a Crown of life.* Note. *The Crown and reward is for him that faithfully perseveres under sufferings for Christ's sake unto the end.*

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He that leaves off half way, is never like to win the prize: Heaven is set forth as a crown and reward of our faithfulness, though not for the merit of the work, but according to the work it is freely given; as wicked works shall not pass unpunished, neither shall good works, or our faithfulness towards Christ, pass unrewarded. *Every one shall receive according as he hath done in the flesh, whether good or evil:* And he that hath fought the good fight of faith, and perseveres therein under all afflictions, and that even to death, he is the true christian conquerour; and for him is laid up the crown of eternal life: The true militant christian must not look for the crown, if he turn's back to the enemy: and that which is most admirable herein, is, that the method of obtaining this crown, is far different from that of obtaining worldly crowns: they are got by over-masterring and surviving the enemy, but the christians crown is gotten by suffering and dying; the christians cross and the crown kills each other. And to let you right that seek after, and contend for this crown,

First, Understand what this crown of life is. It is not only the translation of the soul after death into the supernal heavens, that is not so properly called life, but that blessed state which soul and body shall enjoy after the resurrection of the just, and therefore it is called a crown of life; that is, life given most eminently, which is the most desirable blessing of all things, as being one of the chiefest gifts of the blessed Saints in the resurrection, and so part is put for the whole; and therefore it is here called a Crown of life: To denote unto us, first, That that blessed state of life which the Saints shall then enjoy, will be a most honourable state, and so it is often set forth by a kingdom in Scriptures, Luk. 22. 29, 12. 32. R.V. 3. 21. Secondly, That it is an endless estate. Thirdly, That it is a state gotten by conquest, and as a prize set unto a race, 1 Cor. 9. 24. Fourthly, That it is a most glorious estate, and a living crown, and that that will continue to all eternity.

Secondly, In the next place, understand how this crown of eternal life is rightly to be obtained; every suffering will not do it: The cause must be good that makes a Martyr, it must be for Christ, and that in faithfulness. Secondly, The heart must be upright for Christ therein: It is not vain-glow, or worldly applause, or obstinacy in private opinions, that will weigh the least to make a Martyr, it must be in the uprightness of your hearts, and that you can appeal unto God with the Psalmist, Psal. 44. 21. and say, *The Lord knoweth the secrets of the heart, Yea, for thy sake are we slain all the day long.* Lastly, This suffering must be out of love unto God and his glory, or else all in vain, as Paul said, 1 Cor. 13. 3. *If I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.* There may many die for Christ, and yet not out of love to Christ; obstinacy of mind, and formal profession may

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may do much in that particular; but a true zeal to God and his glory, makes the *Holocaust*, a sweet smelling Sacrifice, and the crown of life its reward.

Observ. The last Observation from these words, is, *Sufferings and afflictions are but the opening the door to a Christians happiness.*

The most happy estate of the worldling, is but vanity; and the most suffering state of a christian, is a crowning: when the christian sufferereth the loss of all things for righteousness sake, he aboundeth then in greater measure of graces; yea, when he suffereth death itself, it is gain unto him; for he hath only left thereby a world of troubles, sin, and vanities, for a crown of life and glory: *For, if our hopes were only in this life, we were of all men most miserable: Therefore be thou faithful unto the death, and thou shalt have a crown of life.*

Vers. 11. Let him that hath an ear, bear what the Spirit saith to the Churches. He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death.

The Spirit doth often inculcate in this and the next chapter, this charge and duty on the judicious and enlightened christian, to take notice what the Spirit of Christ in this spiritual appearance, saith unto the churches: To avoid repetition, see more on this on verse 7. of this chapter. But, *he that overcometh*, that is, that abideth constant and faithful unto Christ and his truths under all temptations and tribulations, and so a faithful christian overcometh, it is he that shall not be hurt of the second death; that is, the second death mentioned in *21 chap. Rev. ver. 8. and 20. 14.* In that Lake which burneth with fire and brimstone for evermore, shall not touch him. Negatives in Scripture strongly evince the enjoyment of the contrary; as, *Thou shalt not be hurt of the second death*; that is, thou shalt surely live, thou shalt taste of the Tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of God, and a crown of life shall be thy portion. It is here called the second death, in respect the first death is but a partial punishment of the wicked; but the second death is, that when the first death and hell shall deliver up the dead were in them, and they shall be cast into the Lake of fire, *cap. 20. 13, 14.* there is a first life, and a second life that we shall enjoy; the first life is that that we now at present enjoy; the life of grace, the second life, we shall be made partakers of at the resurrection of the just. The life that the soul in heaven enjoys, is but a partial life, and incompleat, in respect of that at the resurrection; as the punishment of the wicked under the first death, either spiritual or corporal, is but partial, so the glory of the elect is but partial and incompleat now in heaven, in respect of that that will be revealed at the resurrection. *Abraham* now doth not know us, and *Jacob* is ignorant of us, neither do the saints departed know

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our wants, nor are touched with our infirmities: Their condition is happy, but what it is we know not; but this we are sure of, at the resurrection we shall know, as we are known; and see as we are seen; and this is eternal life, and the crown of life, that is so often promised to the Saints in Scripture. So then, there is a first death, and a second death; the first death is but a partial punishment for the wicked, but the second death is the compleat execution of divine wrath upon them, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for evermore.

Observ. The Observation from the words are, *Th at the constant, faithful, and persevering Christian, is secured from all dangers of death whatsoever.*

Tribulations in this life, and death itself, does him no hurt; that tries him, refines him, and renders him glorious into the hand of his Creator; Hell, Satan, Law, nor the second death cannot take hold upon him, for it is Christ that died for him; for *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's Elect?* It is Christ that is risen for their justification, therefore they are beyond all danger of miscarrying, and so may justly triumph and say, *O Death! where is thy sting? Hell! where is thy victory? But thanks be to God who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* *1 Cor. 15.*

Vers. 12. And to the Angel of the Church which is at Pergamus, write, this saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.

Christ here followeth the charge against the church at *Pergamus*: It is inscribed to the Angel of Pastor of the church which is at *Pergamus*, and in the 18. ver. following, *To the Angel of the Church which is at Thyatira*: the Spirit herein clearly denoting unto us, that the inscription in the first verse of this chapter, *To the Angel of the Church of Ephesus*; or, *of the Ephesian Church*; and here, *To the Angel of the Church at Pergamus*; or, *in Pergamus*. *τῷ ἄγγελῷ τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς οἰκουμένης*, are of one and the same significant and latitude; and therefore such places are very incongruously taken up to prove a Church of the same extent and latitude with the Nation: And though we may lawfully use the terms of the church of *England*, or *Scotland*, *France*, &c. it must always be understood in a limited sense; not that all *England*, *Scotland*, *France*, *Ephesus*, *Smyrna*, or *Pergamus*, were the Church, but that it is the church of *England*, or in *England*, of *Ephesus*, or in, or at *Ephesus*, of *Pergamus*, or rather as it is here, in *Pergamus*, *τῷ ἄγγελῷ ἐπισκοπῆς οἰκουμένης*, in, or at *Thyatira*. And therefore it is most safe, to keep close to the sound of wholsome words, in such expressions.

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Wr.

Write, this saith he that hath the sharp sword with two edges. Christ sets himself forth unto each church in a diverse mode; John saw him in the first chapter, in a general and full appearance and discovery of himself in his full luster. And now he discovers himself by parts unto the churches, according to their several wants and imperfections. Where, by the way, take this Note.

Observe. That Christ's discoveries of himself unto his Churches, are always most suitable to their present conditions.

To afflicted and persecuted faithful churches, as *Ephesus* and *Smyrna* were, he appears as a God of protection and salvation unto them, as in the first verse, under the description of having the seven Stars in his right hand, and walking in the midst of the seven Golden candlesticks; and in the eighth verse he saith to the church of *Smyrna*, for a comfortable discovery unto them, write, *these things, saith he, that is first and last, which was dead and is alive.* But now unto the more unsound and corrupted churches of *Pergamus* and *Thyatira*, his discovery is in another posture, as one having a two edged sword proceeding from his mouth, and eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass, v. 18, an appearance of indignation, Wrath and Judgment. Faithful afflicted Christians need discoveries of grace, peace, and consolation, but unsound and corrupt ones, ought to have the doctrine of Judgments and wrath preach'd unto them; he that knoweth not rightly to divide the words of truth, is no compleat workman in Christ's Vineyard, he is a workman that need not be ashamed, that knows how to preach Gospel, and glad tidings of reconciliation and peace, to poor humbled and repentant sinners; But Hell, and wrath, and judgments, and fiery indignations, to the obstinate and impenitent, the doctrine of grace and threats are not contradistinctives, being wisely managed, yet in this appearance of Christ of having a sharp two edged sword proceeding out of his mouth, there is much mercy in it, for understand, that by the sword of Christ's mouth is meant his word and doctrine: confer with *Heb.* 4. 12. *Psal.* 148. 6. and 36. 5. *Prov.* 5. 4. for that is two edged, and cuts two ways. First, it cuts off the sin and corruptions of the faithful, by its kindly operating through the influence of the Spirit. Secondly, It cuts, confounds, and destroys the wicked, not through any innate quality in the Word, but by accident; for by their refusal and contempt thereof, so consequently of the divine Majesty, the Author and Instituter thereof, God goes out with the other edge or side of his sword against them, on his black and red horse of wrath and Judgments. Hence Note,

Observe. That God's judgments towards his back-sidden Churches are mingled with much mercy.

Though Christ's appearance to *Pergamus* and *Thyatira* was much in wrath, for their defilements and back-slidings, yet he added much grace and mercy thereunto, both in approbation of their

their graces, and calling them to repentance for their defections. Christ gives always line upon line, and precept upon precept; providence after providence, and mercy after mercy, to invite us to repentance, before he will take his last cause of Judgment with us; his heart is still towards our amendment, though he is provoked highly by our sins against us; and who but an heart of Adamant would not belieye him, when he swears, *As I live saith the Lord, I will not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn and live.* And the very weapons that he uses against sinners, are the sword of his mouth with two edges; it heals as well as wounds: the one edge is anointed with the balm of Grace, though the other with the gall of Judgment.

Vers. 13. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast my Name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful Martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

Christ in the first place goes on in the approbation and encouragement of the church of *Pergamus*, and tells her, that he knows her works, and that her habitation, or domestical conversation, for so the word signifies, is in a place even where Satan's Seat is, or Throne is, as the Original has it: We know the Seat or Throne is taken in Scripture for the place, or sign of Dominion, Rule, or Sway, as *Psal.* 1. v. 1. *Blessed is he that sitteth not in the seat of the scornful,* that is, in the society of such scorners as go on with a high hand, and say, their tongues are their own, who shall us controul? As Christ has his Throne and Seat, so Satan has his; as Christ goes out as an absolute Monarch in his Kingdom, hath his Royal Laws and commands, and the observers thereof therein, so Satan hath also his Kingdom, and his Throne set up therein, where his commands are obeyed by the children of disobedience without controul; and therefore this *στρόφη τοῦ σατανᾶ* where the Throne of Satan is, is rendred in the latter part of this verse in another variation, *τὸν ταῦτα ἀστλανῆς*, where Satan dwelleth or does his household affairst. A mans house or habitation is his Throne or his castle, as the Law term has it; therein he exercises his commands freely, either by his Paternal or Magisterial authority, and he hath better title to this Sovereignty, it being natural & moral, then any Sovereign hath to theirs in the world. 2. There are therein its subjects, who obey more freely, in respect of their more divine Economy, then any Prince's Subjects whatsoever. Thirdly, A man's most private designes and transactions are agitated therein. Fourthly, A man therein lives, goes in and out, and no place, be it ever so pleasant, is so complacent to a man, as the place of his own habitation, be it never so homely, and therefore a

man will not spare to spend all his strength, wit, or wealth, to defend his house & place of habitation, against all pretenders of right thereunto. Therefore these metaphors of a Throne, Seat, House, or Habitation, are fitly taken up by the Spirit of God, to signifie unto us the power of Satan in the wicked and ungodly, which in Scriptures, are called his strong holds and habitations; for in them he commands and acts freely, being as a Father, Lord, and Master, to us the children of disobedience; for his servants and children ye are to whom ye obey, and they obey freely and without any regretas dutiful children and servants to such a Father and Master, even the Prince that ruleth in the Ayre, even the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, *Ephes. 2. 2.* there he makes his habitation, there he lives and transacts the highest designes of his Kingdom of darkness, there he takes his delight to dwell, and takes that pleasure in this place of his habitation, that before he will forego it, or lose an inch of his possession, the stronger man in the Gospel must first come, even Christ in his Spirit of Grace, and that after much strugling & contending between flesh and spirit; and that Christ shall be sure to make his Title clear and evident by Faith, and the great charter of the Gospel, before he will be dispossessed of his ancient free-hold Tenures; yea his love, or rather pernicious desire to his old habitation, is such, that after he is dispossessed thereof by Christ, that if he can get or make a re-entry into his lost possession, by his diabolical Stratagems and Temptations, he comes in with seven fold woser spirits then the first, to make good his right and re-entry, if he may, and the condition of that house is far more miserable then at the first. O therefore watch, and be prepared with the armory of Christ to oppose the assaults of Satan, ye believing and enlightened souls! and though he sometimes may foyl you, yet let him not overturn you; though he may endeavour to come into your soul, yet let him not have quiet possession; for greater is he that is with us, then he that is against us, *Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you:* and, through Christ we shall have Victory. Note hence,

Observe That Satan rules as absolute Lord and Sovereign over the unbelieving and disobedient. They are his house, the place of his dwelling, his Throne, his Kingdom, his Seat; and if that were not enough to describe their malignity, and Satan's Sovereignty over them, they are called Satan himself, *v. 10.* The better to manifest Satan's Seat, Throne, and Habitation, in and over the ungodly: consider the contrary, The Seat, Throne and Habitation of God. Though God in his infinite nature, is illocal, infinite, and incomprehensible, as unto any place or form, yet metaphorically is said to be in a place, that is, from whence he in any special manner doth manifest his glory, power, grace, and goodness: So God is said to come, depart, and return, in Scriptures, when he specially manifests himself in grace, mercy, and

and answers to his people, or unto any particular believing Soul; and when God withdraws that appearance of mercy, grace, and glory, nor hears the Prayers of his people, but goes out in Judgments against them, then he is said to depart, to be gone, and return into his place. *Hos. 5. 15.* *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledg their Offence.* God is said to have three special places of habitation, Seats or Thrones in Scriptures...

1. Heaven is his Throne, and his dwelling place. *Isa. 66. 1.* *1 Kings 8. 30.*

2. The hearts of the Saints is his Throne, and dwelling place. *Isa. 57. 15.* *1 Jo. 3. 24.*

3. The Church of Christ; *Zion is the habitation and Tabernacle of his glory.* *Psal. 132. 13.* The Church is the place where God communicates himself, and gives his answers unto his people. And therefore in *1 Tim. 3. 15.* it is called *the House of God,* and often in Scriptures, *the Kingdom of God.* These are the special habitations of God.

Satan hath also three special places of habitation and dominion in Scriptures.

1. In Hell over the damned spirits: And therefore he is called the Prince of darkness, and the Angel of the bottomless Pit.

2. The hearts of the wicked and unbelievers, is the Seat and habitation of Satan. *Ephes. 2. 2.*

3. His Throne is amongst the societies of the wicked; they are his Synagogue, *v. 9.* where his Doctrines are transacted and maintained; and they are his Seat and Throne, from whence all his wicked and pernicious Edicts do proceed against God and Godliness. *Psal. 2. 2, 3.*

Theretore in this verse, the Spirit sayes to the Church of *Pergamus,* *I know that thou dwellest in a place where Satan bears rule in all Idolatries, wickednesses, and hatred to God and his truths without controulement;* and yet, to thy praise and comfort be it, *that thou holdest fast my Name,* and hast not denied my Faith; that is, that thou dost constantly profess my Truth, and hast not been drawn to deny my Gospel, or Doctrine of Faith, not in those very hot and persecuting days, wherein *Antipas,* my faithful Martyr, was slain in that City of yours, by those Tyonical persons there, in whom Satan dwelleth, and prevaleth. There is no farther difficulty in those words, only understand that *Antipas,* as *Aretus* testifies, and some others of Antiquitie, was the Pastor or Bishop to this Church of *Ephesus;* yet others say, he was only an Assistant to the Church: However, this blessed St. *Antipas, Polycarpus,* and some others, were the first Martyrs to the Gospel of Christ after the Apostles, in the reign of *Trajan.* From the words thus explained, Note,

Obj. 2. That the godly by the providence of God, are disposed and mingled amongst the most wilest and wicked in the World. The Church

Church of Christ is likened to a Lilly amongst Thorns, by the Wise-man in the *Canticos*: Where the Synagogue and Throne of Satan was, God had planted those Asiatick Churches. Righteous Job saith of himself, that he was a brother to Dragons, and a companion to Owles. *Chap. 30. 29.* And holy David's soul was vexed, by sojourning in *Mesech*, and dwelling in the Tents of *Kedar*. *Psal. 120. 5.* Honest hearted Joseph had his habitation amongst the Idolatrous Egyptians; and there were *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, and others of Gods precious children, in *Babylon*, amongst the *Caldeans*. It is the common lot of the godly to be amongst Briars and Thorns, that will nothing but scratch and tear them; and therefore it should be no strange thing, nor too great a vexing burden unto us, that God and providence hath disposed of our habitations amongst the ungodly. For hereby,

1. God hath the greater glory from us.

2. We are kept closer to him.

3. Our Graces shine more eminently, as Stars in a frosty night shine clearest, and Fishes in the saltest Seas are sweetest: so we keep our favor the better for it, and our Graces are more enlivened.

4. Our Conversations, if suitable to Gods word, may be a means of their conversion amongst whom we live.

Ob. 3. *To a Godly soule have its habitation amongst the wicked, is a soul vexing grief.* Righteous *Lot* was vexed with the filthy conversation of the Sodomites, *2 Pet. 2. 7.* Though God hath disposed this in his providence, yet it is an affliction, and for the present, grievous. *Wo is me (saith David) that I sojourn in Mesech, and that I dwell in the Tents of Kedar*; with a barbarous & profane people, that were like to the posterity of *Mesech* and *Kedar*. O what a burden it was to *Moses*, and to all true Israelites, to dwell amongst the Egyptians? How did the poor captive Israelites weep, when they were in *Caldea*, by the River of *Chebar*? And what a burden it is still, for honest believing Souls to dwell amongst a profane and wicked multitude? Where they cannot stir out of doores, or converse but with very few, but that they shall hear God profaned, his Name blasphemed; his Truths and Scriptures slighted, vilified, derided, and jested at; his Saints and Faithful ones, either spitefully treated, openly persecuted, or at least closely undermined, to bring the rod of affliction upon them. Therefore among the truly godly, the society and cohabitation of the Saints is most desirable; but of the wicked, most grievous and loathed.

Ob. 4. *God hath the more special eye of care and pruvidence over his people, that have their habitations amongst the wicked and ungodly.* Though they dwell where Satan's Seat and Throne is, yet God holdeth them as the seven Stars in his right hand, *verse 1.* and he knoweth their works of tribulation, and where they dwell, and therefore is present with suitable grace and strength from himself, for

for their support and comfort, *Thou remembrest us* (said David) *in our low estate.* Where Christ's Church hath the greatest enemies, God will shew himself their greatest friend; where his Saints are most afflicted and straitned, there he will supply with a greater measure of grace and enlargement. In *Babylon* of old, among the inveterate enemies of God and his Israel, God sent an *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, *Ezra*, &c. choice men, and Prophets of God, for their comfort and consolation. So we often see in the most barbarous and wicked places of the World, that God sends there the greatest, soundest, and clearest light to his servants that dwells amongst them; *Ephesus*, *Smyrna*, *Pergamus*, &c. places of Idolatry and cruelty, and where Satan's seat was, had their Angels, and Martyrs, that shined in true faith and godliness. The Churches of Christ of late years have shined more eminent in faith and holiness, in *Switzerland*, in *Saxony*, in *Savoy*, and the barbarous corners of the Pyrenean mountains, and *Alpes*, then other places of the World; and so in *England*, and *Scotland*, under the Anti-christian and persecuting Bishops of late, the Saints then living under them, did shine more eminent in their graces, then now they do in this their day of prosperity; and many then were more faithful Martyrs unto the truth of Christ, then now they are: for the more high Satan and his instruments are against the Saints, God's care over them is the more intense, and the measure of his graces the more enlarged towards them.

Ob. 5. *That it is the Saints great duty, and their highest glory, to hold fast their faith and profession of the truth, in the worst times, and amongst the worst of people.* The Church at *Pergamus* is approved for holding fast Christ's Name and Faith, amongst them in whom Satan did bear sway, and in such a time when *Antipas* was Martyred, and suffered death for the same profession. It is an easy matter to carry a full sail of profession, when the soft gale of prosperity bloweth; neither is it any difficult matter for an hypocritical heart to seem godly with the godly, to be sober with the sober, or to be righteous amongst the righteous: But the spirit of a man is then tried, when his habitation is amongst the ungodly, that can keep himself sound amongst their corruptions, upright and perfect amongst the unrighteous, and untainted with their follies, and sweet, as Fishes in the Brackish Ocean. The three faithful children would not bow in *Babylon*, to *Nebuchadnezzar's* Image, though death it self attended them: *Be thou faithful unto the death, and thou shalt have a Crown of life.* Many will follow Christ in smiling times, or when the State does countenance Christ and godliness; this is to follow Christ for the loaves sake: But when Christ is hurried to *Pilat's* Hall of Judgment, his formal followers will forsake him, yea, *Peter* himself may deny him; weak Christians may stumble and draw back, when Pillars of the Church, as *Peter*, fall so foully. He is the only approved Christian

stan, that will hold his profession, fast before the face of *Nero* and *Dioclesian*, as the *virum victorie* which *St. Austin* mentions, and at the Stake, can freely with *Stephen*, forgive his enemies, and commend his spirit unto his God. *Io: Hus, Hierom of Prague*, the poor *Waldenses*, and our later Christian Martyrs, as *Bradford*, *Philpot*, *Glover*, &c. in our English *Marian* days, hath with *Antipas*, for their constant witnessing unto the truth and faith of Christ, attained the ever-living and honorable names of faithful Martyrs of Christ, and that most justly, in that they suffered in the worst of times, when *Antipas* was slain, that is, in a persecuting bloody age, when many godly persons burnt at the Stake, and amongst the worst sort of people, the wicked Antichristian, Tyrannizing, and bloody Prelates, for holding fast the profession of the truth and faith, in such ungodly times, and amongst such a civilish crew, amongst whom Satan had his Throne, sway, and full Dominion, they justly shall ever live, in the memory and hearts of all the faithful, as Reverend Martyrs unto Christ and his truth. Thus for a man to be a *Lot in Sodom*, never touched with *Sodom's* wickedness, to keep himself pure, and sincere, and undefiled in the midst of a crooked generation, to shine as a light in the midst of darkness, this brings honor both to God and man.

Obs. 6. The graces of well approved and faithful Christians departed, are to be set forth as patterns and examples to the living, both for encouragement and imitation. *Antipas* is here set as an example of constancy and faithful Martyrdom unto Christ and his truth. It is great encouragement to the living, to have the pattern of former worthy men before them. It is said, that it was the reading of *Achilles* life in *Homēr*, that made *Alexander* ambitious to be his competitor in noble achievements. Again *Julius Cesar* taking up *Alexander's* example, endeavoured to be sole Lord of the whole World. So also it is on a spiritual account; *Abraham* is called the Father of the faithful, for his approved faith in the promises of God, and they are his children, and the true seed of *Abraham*, that walk in the steps of faithful *Abraham*: And so *Abraham*, *Abel*, *Enoch*, *Noah*, *Sarah*, *Moses*, &c. are made ever-living examples of faith and godliness, for imitation to all generations to come, *Heb. 11*. It much comforts us and bears up our spirits in sufferings, when we hear that Christ our head and captain hath perfected our salvation by sufferings, he having trodden out our first this thorny way, let us not be ashamed to take up our cross and follow him, whosoever he shall call us to it; and so in all things else in him, that are imitable by us, not as he was Mediator, but as a holy person, and head of his mystical body, the Church; and so he presents himself as a gracious example to his Disciples, *Io. 13. 15.* *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.* As he is the perfection of all the creatures, and the light it-self, and wisdom of the Father, so sure o

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all patterns and examples, his in the ways of grace, are most sound, wise, and perfect; And blessed are they they that follow their Lord and Master, for he is the way and the life.

Vers. 14. 15. *But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balack to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto Idols, and to commit Fornication. So hast thou also them that maintain the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.*

The churches of *Smyrna*, and *Laudicca*, only of the whole seven, did pass the approbation of the Spirit without any *but* prefixed, or annexed to them: The church of *Pergamus* had her commendable graces, of constancy in the faith, and profession of the truth, in the worst of times, and amongst the vilest people, even where the Seat of Satan was: Yet all in her is not well, or sound, for Christ comes on with a *but* against her; *But I have a few things against thee, because, &c.* Whence by the way, Observe,

Obs. 1. *That many Churches of Christ, and persons, may suffer much for Christ, and the profession of Christ, yet not sound and right in all the truths of Christ.*

Doubtless the church at *Pergamus* had and enjoyed but sad and afflicting days, when *Antipas* Christ's faithful Martyr was slain, for then she denied not the faith, but held her profession with much constancy. The church at *Thyatira* too, was commended for her faith and her patience, *verse 19.* yet both these churches, notwithstanding their fair profession, they had much rottenness and unsoundness in the root; their Doctrines were not strait that they had among them, there were those in the one, held the doctrines of *Balaam*, and the doctrines of the *Nicolaitans*; in the other, the doctrines of *Fezabel*, and her wicked practices, both most unsound both in doctrine and practise, yet both highly suffering for the Name of Christ. We see that the profession of the Name of Christ amongst the Gentiles, was sufficient to bring suffering on the Disciples, but suffering for that profession was not sufficient to make them sound in all things. Some may prophecy in Christ's Name, and cast out Devils in his Name, and suffer, and give their bodies to be burnt for his Name, and yet at the last day Christ may tell them he knew them not. He that will attain a comfortable Martyrdom for the profession of the Faith of Christ, let him first see that his ends be right.

First, That it be truly and really for Christ.

Secondly, That it be out of love to Christ and his truth.

Thirdly, That it tends wholly to the glory of God, and not at self.

This is the true suffering that will attain to the crown of life. But to proceed, Christ hath a charge against this church of Pergamus, and it is, *Because thou hast there them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balack to cast a stumbling block, or a stone of offence (in the Greek ὄνειδον) before the children of Israel.*

Because thou hast, &c., thou hast, that is, thou keepest, holdest, and intendest to keep and hold; thou hast these Balaamites not by accident, or chance, but by choyce; thou hast them because thou delightest in them, and wilt have it so: Thy habendum and tenendum go together, thou hast them, and wilt not part with them, because thou lovest them; therefore thy sin is the greater herein.

And what hast thou? Those that hold the doctrine of *Balaam*, &c. the doctrine of *Balaam* was, when he saw that God had blessed *Jacob*, and that there was no Inchantment against *Israel*; he curst-edly advised *Balack* the Prince of the Midianites, to make a great Sacrifice to *Baal Peor*, and to invite the Israelites unto it: Now *Baal Peor* was the filthy, lascivious Idol *Priapus*, as *Godwin's Jewish Antiquities* testifie; whose Festivals and Sacrifices were celebrated by both Sexes, in most shameless postures and manners: And therefore, *Hos. 9. 10.* It is said, *they went to Baal Peor, and discovered themselves to their shame*, because it made them shameleis, and to discover their nakednes before that Idol. Now the cursed advice or doctrine of *Balaam* (for a man's doctrine is his advice or counsel) consisteth of two parts.

First, To sacrifice to Idols, and to participate at their cursed Altars, in eating of their idolothites; expressly against the Law of God, and that of *S. Paul*, *1 Cor. 10. 20, 28, Acts 15. 29.* Secondly, In mixing with the Midianitish women, a notion utterly forbiddene to the Jewish Nation, not to meddle with in such a way. So that though *Balaam* could not curse *Israel* according to *Balack's* desires, being overmastered by God, yet it seems his heart went still after the wages of unrighteousnes, as, *2 Pet. 2. 15.* testifies; that is, his desires and heart was to take *Balack's* hire and reward to curse *Israel*; if the Lord had not overmastered both his tongue and heart, and instead of cursing them, he was enforced to bless them; and seeing he could not pleasure *Balack* according to his expectation and desires, as a Prophet in his malediction, yet he was free, as a private *Machavilian*, or an *Architophel*, to counsel *Balack*, that the readiest way to bring the people of *Israel* at enmity with their God, was to bring them to Idolatry and Adultery; and so God that was their keeper and Saviour against all enchantments and cursings, would become their enemy, and deliver them up either to *Balack's*, or the Moabites hands, or smite them himself in wrath and judgment. And indeed *Balaam's* desire and doctrine took effect, and was right unto its end; and accordingly

accordingly they sinned, and accordingly God was angry with them, and *smiteth them with a Plague, twenty four thousand, Num. 25. 9.* compare *Numb. 31. 16.* to *cap. 25. 1, 2, &c.* Now it seems the church at Pergamus had such that held such doctrines of *Balaam*, such as pretended fair, as *Balaam*, and carried, it may be, a high profession to Christianity, yet laid such a scandal or stumbling block before the church, as *Balaam* did to the children of *Israel*; that is, they held that it was lawful to eat of things sacrificed to Idols, to participate of the Idolatrizing Sacrifices, and heathenish Festivals of the Panim Pergamites; as there was of the same consort in the church of Corinth, *1 Cor. 10.* who would needs participate in the Lord's Supper, and in the Idols sacrifices, which was the service of devils, *v. 20.* so pleasant and sweet was the old heathenish Idolatries to the new converted Christians, that they would needs keep their old jovial Feasts and Sacrifices to *Jupiter, Bacchus, Venus, Adonis, Priapus, &c.* together with the Eucharistical Feast of the Supper of our Lord. And not only thus turn spiritual fornicators and adulterers, but also commit corporal whoredoms and fornications; for it was impossible that those loose Idol Feasts could be celebrated without it: for the Feasts and Sacrifices of *Priapus, Venus, Bacchus, Adonis, &c.* the more shame, and bestiality, and lasciviousnes was discovered therein, the more they thought they pleased their God in their Sacrifices: And therefore doubtless it was in the excels, as all Historians that treat thereof do witness: And this is clear from the next verse, for it comes in with a conjunction copulative, *Even so hast thou them that maintain the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans*; a loose, lascivious, and idolizing doctrine, agreeing with that of *Balaams*, only differing in some mysterious notions, being a branch of the high flown Gnosticks, who had peculiar expressions, and un-intelligible notions, proper to their sect. I refer you to the precedent *v. 6.* concerning the Nicolaitans more at large.

This was the *onειδον*, the stumbling-block, the scandal and offence which some corrupt and unsound Christians laid in the way of others in the church of *Pergamus*. This wold stumbling block, is here taken up for the manner of men, in laying stones, blocks, or snares in the way, that make persons fall or stumble thereat; and this word is used in Scriptures sometimes actively, sometimes passively: The Pharises and Scribes were offended, and scandalized at the Doctrine and Miracles of Christ, *Mat. 15. 12.* here was an offence taken, but none given. But an active scandal is, when a real offence is given, and a manifest stumbling-block is laid in the way, as *Balack* did to *Israel*; and when any open evil is committed, either contrary to Gods Law, or when our liberty is used in things indifferent, in an unseasonable time, to the offence of the weaker, whereby they are made the worse, less godly and honest; this also is an active scandal, and a stumbling-block; *Rom. 14.* and to be avoyded of all knowing Christians. The Notes that arise from this verse thus explained, are,

Obser. 1 That God hath a controversie with all such Churches, as hold and maintain pernicious unsound doctrines, and wicked practises.

This is that God hates in the Churches, and are so abominable to him, that God hath a charge against those back-slidden churches for their erroneous doctrines and practises, and threatens them that he will come with the sword of his mouth against them, and will remove their Candlestick from among them, if they do not repent; which in few ages after he exempted against them to the utmost. It is not church privileges will exempt a people sinning against God, from his desolating judgments.

The people of *Israel* was God's peculiar own people, chosen out amongst all the Nations of the world to know his Name; the holy people, *Isa. 62. 12. Dan. 8. 24.* a people near unto God, and blessed above all, *Deut. 7. 6, 14.* They were the people that had the holy Land, Temple, Ordinances, Divine worship, Oracles of God, the Prophets, his Tabernacle, and the most special presence of God. These were the glory of God, and as dear unto him as the apple of his eye. *Zach. 2. 8.* Yet when this people fell to wicked practises, and rebelled against God, and cast off his yoke, his wholesome Laws and Doctrines; none of their church-privileges could secure or protect them from the desolation and judgments which came upon them: It is to small purpose to say, when we sin against God, we have Abraham to our Father; or cry, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord; it is neither birth, privilege, nor church, will secure us from the judgments of God: For the Ax is laid unto the root, and the people that bringeth not forth fruit worthy of repentance, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire. O then! seeing God will not spare his own children, if they sin and rebel against him, and seeing that Judgment must begin at the house of God, and if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly, and sinner appear? *1 Pet. 4. 17, 18.*

Observe. 2, That erroneous and corrupt Churches and Persons, are very obstinate and tenacious of their corrupt principles and practises.

The church of *Pergamus* had those that held and maintained the Doctrines of *Balaam* and the *Nicolaitans*, they did it not underhand, & in secret, but openly and professedly, as the Israelites did in the busines of *Baal-Peor* at the advice of *Balaam* when they committed Idolatry, and whoredom with the daughters of *Moab*, they did it not in a corner, but avowedly, professedly, and shamelessly, as it is evident in *Num. 25.* from v. 1. to 6. And beholdone of the children of *Israel*, came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman, in the sight of Moses, & in the sight of all the Congregation of the children of *Israel*, who were weeping before the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation. When Moses, and the faithful amongst the Israelites were mourning and weeping for the abominations of their brethren,

brethren, then some of them were so bold and impudent, as to come before them, even in their faces, with their sins in their hands, not ashamed of them. Sober Christians will think it strange, that any professed churches of Christ, or Christians, should openly, and professedly, hold and maintain Doctrines & practises as bad as *Balaam's* and the *Nicolaitans*, and if not far worse: And yet this carries as much truth with it, as any Historical relation in the World; and that too, maintained with as much pertinaciousness, impudence, strength of wit, and policy, as if it were the most virtuous or gracious principle in the whole word of God. What a doing, tugging, and patching of counsels there was, for the upholding of Idolatry and Image worship in the church of *Rome* for many ages? All were Anathematiz'd by her, that would not joyn in that false worship; and it is to this day maintained by them, in the face of the Sun, which is the great scandal and stumbling block to the Jews and Turks, to keep them off from the faith unto this day. O most sad! that professed christians should be the greatest and most obstinate Idolaters amongst the Nations round about them: And this is not all, they have their adulteries too, and fornications, professedly owned, avowed, and allowed; else what meaneth the publique Revenues that cometh into the Pope's Coffers from the Stews at *Rome*, and elsewhere, under his Jurisdiction, which were authorized and erected by *Sixtus* the fourth at *Rome*: And Pope *Nicholas* the first, that prohibited the Clergy Marriage, deprived a Priest of his benefice at *Placentia*, for having a wife and children; but the said Priest, afterward proving the said woman to be the wife of another man, and only his concubine, he was again restored. O abominable! and doctrine of devils! honorable Marriage forbidden, and Adultery, and Fornication, allowed and countenanced! And this is not a private opinion, or of some persons in that harlot church; but it exceeds that of *Pergamus*: for they had but some amongst them that held the doctrine of *Balaam*, but it is here more general; & as catholick as their church is, so catholick are those their errors & wicked practises; for as far as the church of *Rome's* jurisdiction reaches so far the worship of Images, her Idolatries & adulteries reach also. But let us turn our eye from this great Scarlet Whore, and look a little, and reflect upon our own reformed churches at home, and see whether there is any thing there maintained and upheld as the Doctrines of *Balaam* and the *Nicolaitans* amongst us: It is no evil to enquire, an enemy discovered is half vanquished. I hope we have but few of the late generation of *Baal's* Priests left among us, of that prelatical party, that endeavour'd with might and main to bring in the doctrines of *Balaam*, and of their above-mentioned mother *Fezabel*, amongst us. 'Tis true, they endeavour'd to lay a stumbling block before the true Israelites of God in their travelling towards their celestial *Canaan*, they enticed and invited the faithful ones

ones of this Nation to the Sacrifices of *Baal Peor*, and to commit Fornication with the Midianitish women; and many precious ones did stumble and fall thereby: but God gave them a day of sorrow and repentance for it. Now their Idolatries and Adulteries consisted in their Altar worships; pompous gorgious Services, cringes, and congies at the crofs, Musical church-services, &c. all which are but part of the garment of the Scarlet whore; but also they committed Fornication with the daughters of *Meab*; that is, they mixed Interest and relation with Antichristians, and joyned counsels with Jesuites, &c. and took up professedly Romish principles and practises; As the doctrine of free-will, liberty of plays on the Lord's day, and conformity to all outward ceremonial rites and services, on purpose to ensnare the conscientious and godly, and to make them fall: And yet this was not all, but like true Balaamites, they taught *Balack* to lay a stumbling block before the children of *Israel*; that is, they incited and stirred up their Prince and Sovereign to do the very same, and to enact heavy and penal Laws against all Non-conformists, to their forms and false worships, and received from *Balack* their fee, the wages or hyre of unrighteousness: It is not he that preaches the Gospel and lives by the Gospel, that receives the wages of *Balaam*, as some Fanaticques of these days would have it, but very suitably it may be applied to such Prophets that will teach their Prince and Sovereign to set up and command a worship which hath none of Christ's stamp upon it, and to enforce it on the consciences of the truly godly, on great penalties, thereby to insnare them, and make them stumble, if they may: These are true Balaamites indeed, and for this their Antichristian service, they expect great revenues, encouragements, and honors, as wages due unto them, and this is the wages of unrighteousness; 2 Pet. 2. 15. which *Balaam* loved. There is another sort amongst us, that hold professedly the doctrine of the Nicholaitans and *Balaam*; that hold no difference between good and evil, and that good and evil consists only in opinion, not in reality; and these are high flown Anti-Scripturists, and Antinomistical Atheists, and are not so much as to be conversed with as christians, but to be looked on as aliens and strangers to God, his Laws, and the Commonweale of *Israel*. The Lord open their eyes to see their madness and folly, if it be his blessed will.

Observ. 2. The true worship of God, and false, can never stand together.

Dagon and the Ark cannot be competitors under one Roof. Christ will not endure the doctrines of *Balaam*, Idolatries and Adulteries, to be practised in his churches; if his church will entertain such doctrines and teachers, he will hate them for it, and he will no longer be their teacher, but will become their enemy, and come against them with the sword of his mouth. We cannot serve two Masters, Christ and Mammon at once, either we must

love

love the one, and hate the other; For there is no fellowship between light and darkness, the one alwaies expels the other.

Observ. 3. That false Teachers (as Balaam) may carry a high and fair hand of profession, and yet still Balaamites in their hearts.

Balaam was a Prophet, and prophesied very clearly of Christ; Numb. 24, and carried a very fair hand in profession, as to desire the death of the righteous, and yet still loved the wages of unrighteousness: So many false Prophets of our days may profess fairly, and Prophesie many excellent things of Christ and his truth, and yet still Balaamites in their hearts, loving the wages of unrighteousness; willingly they would curse the godly, & blast them if they could, but God providentially by his wisdom hath overpowred them; yet though they know that there is no enchantinent against *Jacob*, nor divination against *Israel*, they will teach *Balack*, as fly Machiavilians, to lay snares to entrap the true Israelites of God, and make them fall; advising, as cunning Politicians, their Sovereign Authority to enact strict Laws, for conformity unto their false and wil-worships, on purpose to make the conscientious godly to stumble against the just authority of the Magistrate, and so to sin and perish. And hereby that honorable and just mainteinance which Gospel Ministers may rightly receive and demand of their flocks, is become unto such the wages of unrighteousness.

The Papists at this day carry a high hand of profession, and who higher then they? Who more costly in their services and worships? Who more desiring the death of the righteous, as their monastical lives, and Voraries of all sorts testifie, then they? Yet who hath laid more stumbling-blocks in the waies of christians and the truth, then they, by their Balaamitish doctrines and practises? It is most usual amongst us to commend the days of our forefathers, as most imitable and religious; yet how sad to consider, when we find the very doctrines of *Balaam* left unto us from them, for thought at present I have not numbered the thirty seventh year of my age, yet I well remember how ripe the doctrines of *Balaam* were practised here amongst us, and that too, by imitation from our predecessors. We had our *Floralia*, our Feasts and Sacrifices to the Goddess of *Mata*, which were carried on with a great and solemn vanity, with much Paganish customs exercised thereabout, mixed with a great deal of vanity, sin, shame, and bestiality; and this not only permitted, but maintained and defended by ungodly Balaamites, in opposition to the godly in their times: Yet the practise thereof in these parts was so vile, that the same persons, the same day that they did eat of the body and blood of Christ in his Ordinance of the Supper, the same day were drunken, and filled with things offered unto idols; I mean, in their heathenish spots and vanities; but blessed be God that hath now taught us otherwise. Yet though at present we

make

make a fair profession, yet still we have some remainders of this doctrine of *Balaam* all *England* over, even in keeping our *Wakes*, our *Revels*, our *Parochial Festivals* afoot, wherein there is a great smatch of *Antichristian Idolatrizing*, and eating things offered to *Idols*, and lusting after the *Midianitish* women, and *Flesh pots*, and *Onyons* of *Egypt*; in the observation of these and other *Roman Festivals*. If *Feasts* or *Festivals*, be they never so piously instituted, as the *Ayam*, or *love-Feasts* amongst the primitive Christians were, once come to be defiled, and to lose their *Primitive virgin institution* and ends, and to become *Sacrifices* to *Bacchus*, or *Venus*, or to any *Idol* whatsoever; they are to be disanulled, abrogated, and laid aside, as an *unholy thing*. The Lord deliver his churches and people from the *politique Balaamites* of these times, who will teach *Balack* to lay a *stumbling block* before the children of *Israel*; and the Lord give a discerning heart unto our *Sovereign Magistrate*, to discover all such that come unto him, and move or teach him to lay *stumbling blocks* or *snares* in the ways of the true *Israelites* of God; let such have the wages of *Balaam* who have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of *Balaam* the son of *Bear*, so let them receive the wages of *unrighteousness* for their hire.

Observ. 4. That false Prophets and false Teachers, are still ready to insinuate with, and please the humors of the Princes of the people, in all their wicked designes.

Balaam was very ready and intense to answer *Balack's* cursed desires against *Israel*, if the Lord had not prevented him: What else made *Balaam*, after he had the denial of God, that he should not go to *Balack*, *Numb. 22. 12.* to make another application to God to get permission to go to *Balack*? And when he knew his errand, that it was to curse *Israel*; how often did he tempt the Lord with *Sacrifices*, if possibly he could, to draw God to his designe? And though God did manifest his displeasure to *Balaam* in his way, in the busines he went about, by the *Angel* with the *sword*, and made his *Ass* miraculously to reprove him; yet neither *miracle*, *cross*, *providence*, nor *prohibition*, shall hinder *Balaam* to serve *Balack* against the *Israelites* if he may. If once *false Prophets* perceive the humor of their *Princes*, they will be sure to sew pillows under their arm-holes; they will observe the humors of men, and apply themselves to please answerably: Yet this is not all, they will, as *Balaam*, instruct *Balack* in wicked and cursed designes and practices, though they have commands enough to the contrary, and witnessed sufficiently from heaven against it; yet they will justle such cursed and bloody plots into their *Princes* hearts that they never thought of, yea that are abhorrent to some of their natures; as it is witnessed in the *History of Q. Mary*, That her own natural disposition was good and merciful, and only instigated and taught to persecution against the *Saints*, by the wicked *Balaamites*

Balaamites, *false Teachers*, as *Bonner*, *Fisher*, &c. It is observed by some that our late King *Charles of England* had never split the *Ship of the Commonwealth* against the *Rock*, had he not hearkened too much to the advice of the *Balaamites* about him, the *Bishops*, & their corrupt party, who taught him to lay *snares* or *stumbling-blocks* in the way of the true *Israelites* of God in this Nation; to wit, by the promotion and countenance of *Romish Idolatries*, and their *Midianitish Fornications*: But behold the wisdom of God, they were both taken in their own *snares*, and laid in the *dust* together: And so according to that, *Numb. 31. 8.* *They slew the King of Midian with their Princes*; and *Balaam also*, the son of *Beor* they slew with the *sword*. Beyond *Seas* it is a *Proverb*, *No cursed design afoot, but a Priest has a finger in it*: I could pray it were not in *England*; I could wish that they in our *Israel* had less of *Achitophel* or *Machiavel* in them, and more of the simplicity of the *Gospel of Christ* in the room thereof.

Observ. 5. False Prophets, as *Balaam*, *lay their design's not only for the temporal destruction of the godly, but for the eternal also*, if they may.

Balaams designe in his cursed counsel to *Balak* was, that the *Israelites* should *Idolatrize* and *adulterize*, that the *judgements* of God might both reach their bodies and souls together. The *devil* and his agents desire, that all may have no better portion then themselves; they will not be contented with the destruction of *Saints* bodies, but will night and day, like roaring *lyons*, go about to seek to destroy them, and to cause them to lose and forfeit their *eternal state of happiness*, if they could. It was this that made the *churches of Asia* to lose their *candlesticks*, and it will be always the *Balaamitish* *doctrines* and *practices*, that will cause God to remove his presence of *grace*, *power*, and *comfort*, from one people to another, that is more sound and *fruitful*; O therefore, ye *churches of Christ*, look to your *doctrines* and *practices*, that they be right and straight to the rule of God's *Word*, so God will delight to dwell among you, and will make you the *habitation* of his *glory*, otherwise will leave your place desolate and forsaken; though you be his *people* in profession: If you turn to *idols*, *false worships*, and *wicked practices*, though *Moses* and *Elijah* be among you (righteous souls!) they shall only save them selves, but the wicked, shall be cut off from the land of the living, which is reserved as an *inheritance* for the *pure* and *undefiled*.

Observ. 6. That where ever Idolatry is admitted into a church, looseness and lasciviousness presently follows.

Errour is *fruitful*, and one brings forth another: As soon as the *church of Pergamus* maintained the eating of things offered unto *idols*, which is the *service* of *divels*, presently they joynt hands with the *obscene* *sect* of the *Nicolaitans*: when the *Israelites* joyned to the *sacrifices* of *Baal Peor*, *Numb. 25.* they became *shameless*,

lcs, and presently fell on the Midianish women: in *Ezek. 8.14.* we shall read, that there were Jewish women weeping for *Tammuz*, that is, as some read it, *Adonis*, or an idol or image of *Adonis*, who was a great lover of *Venus*, and slain by a Boar, in whose memory there were celebrated yearly solemnities, in which were the weepings of women; or, as *Funius* has it, it was *Osyrts*, an Idol of the Egyptians and Phoenicians, in whose rites they forgot all bounds of modesty, and discovered their nakedness to the Idol. So corrupt is false worship and idolatry, that it and filthiness do usually walk hand in hand together: in most parts of the jurisdiction of *Rome*, but especially *Italy* and *Spain*, *Rein* the greatest and most notorious idolatries are committed and countenanced, there are the greatest obscenities both in words and actions; yea, and that commonly practised among them which is unnatural and Sodomish, and not so much as to be named among christians: so it was so here once within our memories with us, as soon as we had tasted the same grapes of *Rome*, lust was soon promoted both in Court and Country.

Ques. But if you here demand wherein lies the mischievousness and grievousness of this sin of Idolatry?

I answer, 1. All Idolaters, they forsake the true God.

2. They change the glory of the incorruptible God into the form of creeping things.

3. They thrust out the Ordinances of God from their holy places, and at last God himself.

4. They slight God and his help in extremities, and call to their idols, that see not, hear not, nor understand, as the Papists do to *S. Anthony*, *S. Francis*, &c.

5. They become prodigal towards their idols; as the Adulterer thinks nothing too much for his harlot, so they nothing too much for their idolatrizing worship; witness the church of *Rome*.

6. They become unclean, and Nicolaitans, which thing God hates.

7. They become fools, infatuated, and delivered over to a reprobate sense, whilst they disclaim the great, infinite, glorious, holy, and all-wise God; and in the room thereof, adore Bats, Oxen, Moles, Owls, &c. and that which is worse, little pieces of dead wood, metal, and the like, carved and framed by the hand of the workman: and this is the just hand of God upon all Idolaters, who receive not the truth in the love of it, and therefore God gives them over to strange delusions, and believe a lie.

Observ. 7. The last Note from these words shall be, That it is one of the difficultest undertakings of the Ministry of Christ, to take off or wean either new planted Churches or newly reformed ones, from their old false worships and practises.

Some of the new planted churches, as of *Pergamus*, *Corinth*, and other of the Gentiles, thought that they might still participate of

of their former sacrifices of devils, and their idolathites, and of Christ's Table also; but the Apostle *Paul* was very bitter against such, in *1 Cor. 10. 20, 21.* and the Spirit here also falls foul upon them, and sets a check upon the Pergamitish church for entertainment of such doctrines: What ado had *Paul* also to take off the believing Jews from their circumcision and *Mosaical* rites; they would needs have the observation of all the ceremonial Law, and paedagogy of *Moses* joyned to Christ for justification, and so make Christ of none effect: no less then a full council of Apostles and Elders were sufficient to remove this stumbling block out of the way, *Acts 15.* and what a difficult busines it was in the first Reformation, to reform up fully, all the world knows; what uproars, commotions, and civil wars there were in *K. Edward* the sixth's days, when the Mass-book was but turned into English, as some of *K. Edward*'s counsellors advised our Cornish Rebels, who were then in Arms for their old *Mampismus*, and Popish worship? And surely *Luther*, not *Zwinglius*, nor *Calvin*, could go on with a thorow Reformation in *Germany*, *France*, or other places, in respect of the unpreparedness, and unsuitable state and condition of the Nations among whom they began the Reformation, being so long time settled and fixed upon their old lees, it was a very difficult work for them to go farther thorow with it, then was fit and competent for that generation, who always reserved some reliques remains, and smacks of Popery, though the main works were beaten down; and therefore some heady people of those times, that would not condescend in any thing, or have providential carriage towards the weaker and darker sort of people, would reform things even to the height and full pitch of Reformation according to the primitive pattern; but the people of them ages being not able to bear it, it caused much trouble to the church and through intemperate zeal, much hinderance and obstruction to the begun reformation, and advantage to the enemy: But since in many places and Nations of the reformed, this reformation hath made a further progress by some steps; yet still amongst most of the reformed, not only in this Nation, but elsewhere, there are some remains of the old false worship and practises, and a lusting after them; so strong a desire we have to the imitation of our predecessors practises, be they never so corrupt: yet blessed be God for that reformation we enjoy, and liberty to profess and practise the ordinances of God, according to the most undefiled and purest pattern that we judg agreeable to the Gospel of Christ. What shall us desire more on our own parts? Or, what greater blessing can we expect from God by the sword of the Magistrate thent to be protected, secured, and countenanced in the ways and worship of God according to a good conscience? If the Ministers and Churches will not reform in such a day when publique Edicts are gone forth from *Cyrus* to set *Israel* free, I wonder when they

they will fall upon it? Do they expect the Magistrate to command and compel all unto the work? Alas, this is not the generation that all will be fit for such a work in a whole Nation or Kingdom; no, never will there be such a golden age, until Christ himself shall come with the fan in his hand, to purge his garner, and take the Kingdom unto himself. Is not the church a Lilly among thorns? If the whole Nation be the church, where are the thorns? Are they the other neighbour Nations about? Alas, they are Lillies too; churches (on that account) as well as you: Are they the gentle Nations, as, Turks, Persians, Antichristians, and Popish Nations? As Italians, Spanish, French, &c? Alas they are no Thorns to you; the reformed Nations are in equal ballance to them, and as apt to hear them, as they you; But I confess you have those christian societies and churches among you, that are as Lillies shining in graces among those Thorns and unfruitful Nations; and to retard our reformation in church and ordinances, till all be squared and hewn fit for this work, or before the Magistrate compels all unto this work, is vain expectation, seeing that there is so much of that old leaven of our ancestors, National Churches, National Officers, Birth privileges and Ordinances on that account &c, still remaining in the hearts of most amongst us, that it will not only render the work of a full reformation in this generation, most difficult, but the attempt thereof rather dangerous and prejudicial, not only to the faithful in this Land, but generally to the cause of Christ, in all the reformed Nations round about us. Witness the intemperate zeal of many that lived in the days of the first reformation, who became a reproach and a shame in their irregular attempts about this work: Though they had good hearts, and desired and aimed at good and just things; yet they prosecuted it not justly, for to denominate a good action or work. The thing it self desired and attempted, must not only be a good and honest thing in it self, as a full reformation to God's word is; but it must have other honest circumstances in it also:

1 The time when must be considered, in such a time when God and a clear providence calls unto it.

2 The manner how must be considered, in a peaceable maner, it is to be endeavoured and promoted, as the work of the spirit of peace; not with wars, tumults, and rebellions against Magistrates, which is as the sin of witchcraft: So that the best action may lose its reward, and the tempters thereof suffer justly for the unjust prosecution thereof. It is a sure rule to christians, that they are to do no evil, that good may come thereof. We are not to sin against the Laws of God, nor his Ordinance of Magistracy (unless cases of inevitable necessity, where God will rather have mercy then Sacrifice) to promote any just end or good whatsoever; for we are bound to walk by the rule of God's commands and precepts, not of events and providences. Therefore all ye faithful

full ones of this land, be wise and sober in this your way of temptation, stop not the current of God's reformation by your precipitate and irregular actings, be you still and you shall see the salvation of our God: You see the main hinderance of this full work amongst us, even the old leaven of false worships derived and left unto us from our ancestors; God will remove this more and more by steps and degrees, and that more generally, and will enlarge the Tents of *Jacob* among us, if we provoke not God by our sins towards him: But to expect a total reformation, never look for it until the day Star shall arise with an incomparable glory. In the interim, let us walk honestly, and soberly, like children of the Light, serving and fearing God, and honoring the King; and then God will make them unto us Nursing Fathers, and Nursing Mothers. And most happy and blessed are the people that have their portion and lot in such a Land.

Object. But after all this an Objection may be risen. The church of *Pergamus* had those among them that held and maintained the doctrines of *Balaam* and the *Nicolaitans*, and practised spiritual and corporal adulteries, so held the church of *Corinth*. *Thyatira* had the doctrines of *Fezabel*, *Galathia* the Jewish doctrine of circumcision, and many other great corruptions were among those primitive churches; as, drunkenness, denying the resurrection, incest, eating things offered unto Idols, and the obscenity of the *Nicolaitans*: Yet these are still called the churches of Christ, his seven candlesticks, his faithful ones, called and elect. And are not then our Parochial churches, our National churches, as truly churches of Christ as those were? And are they not as sound in doctrine and practices, as those first primitive christians and churches were, and so deserve the Name of churches of Christ, faithful, elect and called as well as they?

I Answer, We are to look unto the first institution of all churches; if they are gathered and planted by the Ministry of the Gospel and Spirit, they are truly churches of Christ, elect and called; though in proces of time, the envious one sowed plentifully among the good Wheat, his Tares and Darnel, as among those of *Corinth*, *Pergamus* and others in the Primitive time; yet I believe Christ had but a few things against theirs, in respect what he has against ours; they were but corrupt in part, ours all leprous; they lost but some members, we the very vitals: For I much question, whether our National churches were of this Gospel structure, as those primitive churches were at the first, seeing we read in History of their civill institution and beginning being so divided or ordained by the politique Laws of the Nation: Yet withall I say, we had the sincere faith of Christ here preach'd amongst us presently after, if not in the very Apostles days, by *Joseph of Arimathea*, as Historians testifie; this good seed was almost lost among us, but again revived by the providence of God

God in after ages, but held captive and low under the Tyranny of Antichristian darkness, yet doubtless God had here and elsewhere his invisible church and elect ones. Our succession to the Apostles is by cleaving to their doctrines, and so we own a succession from them, but not a visible succession of churches, for so we have sayled under the Antichrists reign and tyranny over us: and to plead that our parochial Societies are churches of Christ, is but at best to plead that our Hundreds or Counties are church-divisions, Presbyteries, or Ecclesiastique Jurisdictions, also being of the same civil institution with the former. But some write that *Dionysius* Pope of *Rome* was the first divider and institutor of Parishes about *Anno 267.* and brought into *England* by *Honorius* Bishop of *Canterbury*, as learned Master *Selden* in his *Book de Decimis* testifies.

2 I Answer, If our churches were right in their first institution gathered by the word and spirit, we have as really lost the very being of our churches under Antichrist's reign, as the churches of *Corinth*, *Pergamus*, *Ephesus*, *Smyrna*, &c. under the Saracanical tyranny and Mahometanism: And therefore there is as great need to call our churches out of *Babylon*, and to restore them from Antichristianisme, as *Pergamus* &c. of the miserable captivated Asian churches from Turcism, and Mahometanism; unless we grant, that the whore of *Babylon* had the keeping and was the preserver of the Ordinances of the true Spouse, and had the power of the Keys committed unto her: And therefore the authority that many churches pretend unto by succession of churches, is but a sorry one, and at the best, but Antichristian and Popish.

Lastly, I Answer, That it is not corruptions in a church do nullifie a church, though very high, if right and sound in the root, and hold fast the faith. This gives the very being to a church; and so I say, that many of our National churches, having now renounced their institutions and calls from Antichrist, and being called to the fellowship of the faith by the ministry of the word and spirit, are become Spouses of Christ, called, and faithful, though mixed with many corruptions, and unsound Doctrines and practises, as *Pergamus*, *Corinth*, and others were; yet for their Doctrine of Faith and Sacraments amongst them, are to be accounted as golden candlesticks of the Lord, churches of Christ, holy, and sanctified: But still observe this, that the church of *Smyrna*, the more pure and undefiled one, hath the greater praise, greater manifestation of love, grace, comfort, and glory on her, then any of the others the more unsound ones; though they be Sisters, yet this is the only one of her Mother; though all the rest be Daughters yet this is the Rose of *Sharon*, and the Lilly of the Valleys; though the rest are Christ's Vineyards too, yet this is the Garden inclosed, where he takes his delight at Noon. And thus much hereon shall suffice.

Vers.

Vers. 16. Repent or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Repent,] *Miswindov*, grow wiser, change thy judgment, and practise from evil to good, cast off thy Idolatries and adulteries, and do thy first works, and return unto me in sincerity and holiness; or else it shall not be long before I come against thee, and make war against thee (for so the word πολεμειν carries it) and that with a most cutting confounding weapon, the *Sword of my mouth*, which is his word and doctrine. Christ makes War with his Enemies by the *Sword of his mouth*, or *Word*, two ways.

First, He manages it (as light to discover darkness) by his Angels and Ministers, both for the evincing, confounding, and overthrowing all false worshipes, doctrines and practises: And thus he manifests his displeasure from Heaven, by his *Word*, against allworkers of iniquity, as he does here, against the Balaamitish, and Nicolaish doctrines of *Pergamus*, and as he hath done of late amongst us, against all Popish and Superstitious Innovations, and false worshipes.

But, Secondly, If the ministerial convincing word will not serve to re-call and bring to repentance his rebellious people or enemies, he will proceed farther by his terrible doctrine or words of judgment against them. If *Pergamus* will not repent upon the conviction of her sins, Christ will go out and fight against her, and remove her candlestick from amongst her; yea, God will call for a *Nebuchadnezzar*, a *Mahomet*, an *Ottoman*, and they shall be called his servants, to execute the Lord's commands, and burthens of Judgment, against his rebellious fintul churches: And thus Christ's sword of his mouth is to be understood, with which he fights against his enemies, *Chap. 19. 21.* Thus the remnant of the followers of the Beast and false Prophet, were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the Horse, which sword proceedeth out of his mouth; that is, (as honest Bishop *Hall* on the place says) they were slain by the powerful command of Christ, (not only Spiritually or Analogically, but corporally) and upon their bodily death all the fowles were filled with their flesh: thus far Bishop *Hall*. God commands to take the children of Babel and to dash them against the wall. Take those mine enemies and slay them before me, saith the Lord. Thus we see what is the sword of Christ's mouth that he draws against his unrepentant and obstinate wicked churches; first contusion of their false doctrines, by his powerful ministerial word and spirit. Next of their persons, by commanding Wars, or Famine, or Pestilence on them, for they are also his destroying weapons, *Jer. 47. 7.* Now this is done and commanded by Christ sometimes expressly in Scripture, as, *Rev. 18. 6, 7, 8.*

Reward

Reward her as she hath rewarded you. and, cap. 12. 10. He that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword. Sometimes it is done providentially, by moving on the hearts of Princes to war; the Persian against the Turk, or the Turk against the Emperour or Venetian, the English against the Spaniard, and Spaniard against the French; and so in the turmoiles thereof, many corrupt churches of Christ perish utterly, as to their outward state and policy; and this is the way that the great whore her self will fall and perish, *Rev. 17. 16, 17.* Or thirdly, God sends immediately his destroying Angels to execute his wrath; as, *Ez. 9. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.* against his Idolatrous people the Jews, and as many other places testify, to smite them for their abominations, and their wickednesses.

Observ. 1. Note from these words, *That repentance is the only Gospel remedy to divert the wrath and judgments of God gone forth against a wicked Church or People.*

Repent, or else, saith the Spirit unto the church of *Pergamus*, you know what will follow. Turning from sinful ways, and turning to God, is the only way to keep God's presence still amongst us: If we would have had turned unto God from our former false ways of worships and wicked practises against God's Laws and his Saints, we should not have seen those late desolating days amongst us. *Ahab's* repentance, though it was formal and outward, yet it stopped the hand of Gods judgments much in his days; but where there is a real repentance or turning unto God, by a back-slidden and corrupted church, God really diverts his threatened judgments: and this is merely a doctrine of grace, and not Legal, as some would have it, for the Law saith, *The soul that sinneth shall die;* the Law admits of no sorrow and repentance for sin, but satisfaction and justice; but the Law of grace or gospel in the hand of Christ, he having fully satisfied both Law and Justice for sin and the breach of the Law, cryes out in the Streets, and to every creature, *Repent and believe, believe and repent, for the remission of sins.* See more at large on the precedent 5. vers. of this cap. what repentance is. But by the way take a character of true penitents.

First, They abhor themselves in their own eyes; the sight of their sins makes them to abhor and loath themselves, *Ezek. 20. 43.* and *Eph. 42. 6.*

Secondly, This they doe not so much for the evil that sin brings upon them, as for the evil it self which is in sin; being an offence against God, and his Divine Will and holy Laws. *Psal. 51. 2.*

Thirdly, Their repentance is universal and perfect; as to its parts; it is not one sin or corruption they leave, but all: *Ezek. 20. 43. Ye shall loath your selves in your own sight for all the evils that you have committed.*

Fourthly,

Fourthly, They are afterwards the more jealous of God's glory, and fearful to sin against him, saying, *How shall we doe this thing, and sin against our God?* Who hath washed us, and cleansed us, and sanctified us: How shall we defile our selves again by sin, lest our state become seven fold worse then the first? This is the temper of a gracious repentant Spirit.

Observ. God is so gracious that he always premonisheth, before he strikes in judgment his rebellious and sinful people.

He calls them to repentance before he will go forth to fight with the sword of his mouth against them: He will not come in wrath upon them unwarned. If God hath decreed a general destruction or desolation to any churches, he will make it known unto his Prophets, they shall declare it to his people: And therefore so often here in these two chapters Christ says, *Let him that hath an ear hear what the spirit saith unto the Churches.* Let him that is wise among you consider well of those Judgments which are to come upon you, and are made known unto you by your Prophet *John*; And to what end doth God this?

First, that the Lords Elect and precious ones among them may be awakened out of their sins, and brought to repentance.

Secondly, That they may be secured from eternal ruine, if not from temporal.

Thirdly, That the wicked and impenitent may acknowledge their own evil ways, and give glory to God, and justifie God's righteous proceedings against them: Yea often God will premonish a long time, and bear long with the sins of his people, before he will execute the punishment due unto them, *Isa. 42. 12. Jer. 3. 5.* God could in a moment crush them all with his breath, yet waits long for their repentance, *399.* years, *1. Pet. 3. 20.* a- about 100 years, *in the days of Noah whilst the Ark was a preparing,* God's long-suffering waited for the repentance of the old world, by the Preaching of *Noah* unto them: How long did God premonish us since the first time of the first reformation, by his faithful Prophets and Ministers, to purge and cast out the leaven of Antichristianism from among us, before he would go out in Judgment against us; was not his long-suffering exercised towards us from *Henry 8.* and *Edward 6.* days, unto these present times, a hundred years and upward, still looking and expecting that we would pull down the High places and Groves that *Jeroboam* built, and the Priests of Baal in the confines of our holy Land; and this was the Lord's long-suffering to us-wards, sending us Prophet after Prophet, and Precept upon Precept, to preadmonish us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, yet for all this, and the many days of peace and plenty God did give unto us, inviting us as by gracious opportunities to ammendment, we grew worse and worse, and added more abominations in the services of God then was at first, until at last

the Lord came to fight against us with the Sword of his mouth, of War, Pestilence, and Famine, as we have lately had sad experience of.

Observe. 3. That though God in mercy to his people, gives them often a long time of premonitions unto repentance, yet if they continue impenitent, he will come quickly against them.

That time that we look upon as long and far distant, as 100, 500, or 1000 years, is but as a day with God, yea, but a little space, and at present with him, for he is Eternity itself, without measure or number. Though it was in some ages after, that Christ came in judgment against those Asian churches for their sins, yet he came quickly against them, in a time nearer then they thought of: It is a quick and short time unto sinners when Judgments reach them unexpectedly: Though it is many hundred years ago, that that proud City and Scarlet Whore began her reign as Queen, and the time of her reign being for 1260 days, yet it is said, *Rev. 18. 2.* *Babylon is fallen, Babylon is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils*, that is, God sees it as already done for the certainty of it, and all things future are as present with him. And though it is above 1600 years since Christ ascended, yet he says *Rev. 21. 20.* *Surely I come quickly, Amen.* The people of the old world, and of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, thought the day of God's vengeance afar off, till they were all swept away with the desolating judgments of God. Who would have thought in K. *Charles* his time, when Revelling, Quaffing, Dauching, and all vanities were in their Throne, that God should come and write a sentence of desolation and misery on himself and Kingdom, as on *Belsazar*, *Dan. 5. 4, 5, 25*, *M'N B, M'N B, T B K B L U P H A R S I N.* *This day is thy Kingdom taken from thee, and given to Darius the Median*, ver. 30, 31. Therefore if we be found in the same transgressions with our predecessors, let us not be secure, but fear and tremble, lest the same judgments overtake us also: *Happy is the man that feareth always*, saith the Wise-man, *Prov. 28. 14.* Let God's judgments come sooner or later, they will come quick enough upon secure unrepentant sinners: It is too late to prevent the fire when the house is in flames: O let that Proverb in *Ezek. 12. 22.* be no longer used in *Israel*, saying, *The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth.*

Observe. 4. That God's people and Churches fare the worse for the entertainment of the wicked among them.

All of the church of *Pergamus* were not Balaamites or Nicolaitans, but that they had them among them that held their abominable doctrines, yet however, for free toleration of them, Christ will come against them all, not only against the wicked, to fight against them with the sword of his mouth, but also, I will come against thee quickly, thou whole church of *Pergamus*, for suffering these abominations in the midst of thee. The church of *Thyatira*

Thyatira had the same check for suffering the woman *Jezebel* among them; and at last, together with the church of *Pergamus*, were both wrap'd up in the same desolating judgment and misery, for the entertainment of these abominations among them. Liberty to sin is no part of that liberty with which Christ hath made us free. Faithful ones may plead for liberty for different things and judgments, in themselves not simply morally evil, or against the positive Laws of God; but for for spiritual or carnal adulteries, such must needs be either the advocates of Antichrist, or the devils, that plead for their sufferance and toleration: As there are various diseases in bodies, so they have their various medicines: If the distemperature grows high and inflames, it may endanger the death of the body: So it is in Christ's mystical body, his church, if the distempered gangrene grows high and spreading, and ulcerate, it may endanger the whole vitals of that church. As there are in natural Phyick, blood-lettings, evacuating, healing, corroding and cauterizing medicines; so in our spiritual Phyick there are variety of Medicines, suitable to all the distempers of the body, the church; and they that use Lenitives or healing Medicines, when the disease calls for corroding or cauterizing Plasters, are but merciless Physicians, and will kill and murther, rather then cure and save alive.

Object. But you will object, How is the justice of God vindicated, if he smites both godly and ungodly together, for the sins of the wicked among them?

I answer. If the godly in a church do connive, freely tolerate, or wink at the sins of the wicked, they are come partakers with them also therein, so also justly in their judgments and miseries. The churches, and faithfull, in *Pergamus*, and *Thyatira*, were justly visited by God, for suffering the doctrines of *Balaam*, *Nicolaitans*, and *Jezebel* among them, and righteously wrapt up in one common calamity, with the Balaamites and Nicolaitans.

But secondly, if the faithful in a Church do protest, declare against, and endeavour as much as in them lies, and by all lawful means for the purging out of the evil and erroneous persons and doctrines among them, they have done their duty towards God, and delivered their souls from guilt. Though the common calamity and judgment of God on the wicked may reach these too, without any derogation to divine justice, for it toucheth not them as a judgment, but as tryals, and for other good ends of God: *Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel*, and other faithful servants of God, suffered very much in the Caldean captivity; yet not as for their own sins, but for other especial ends of God: But very often God doth and will save his faithful ones, as wheat amongst the chaff, by a temporal salvation in the midst of judgments, and destruction of wicked ones round about. God will call out righteous *Lot* from *Sodom*, and will provide *Noah* an Ark, when he comes

comes with flames of fire, or floods of desolating waters on the wicked world, did not God's persevering providence and special mark of grace appear in this Nation in preserving and keeping many precious graines of Wheat amongst all our chaff, in this late day of our winnowing and tribulation. And many whereof as it were, were taken by the hand by God; as righteous *Lots* and *Noah*, and *Arks* provided for them by God to pass from *Sodom* and the wicked world, over the floods, into a land of rest, the Mountains of *Ararat*; I mean the wildernesses of *America*. And so indeed the faithful witness of Christ, by the Dragon's pouncing out of clouds of persecution after them, fled into the wilderness, and were there preserved for some times, until the day of wrath was over. Therefore when you see your faithful *Lots*, *Noahs*, &c. fly from you, or called by God to places of security, look then for desolating times: *Isa. 26. 20, 21.* When our *Hallows*, as *Swallows*, &c. fly from us, it is a signe of approaching winter: So when good and godly men are removed out of their places, or driven into corners, then observe it as a true Prognostick, Judgment and Indignation is nigh at hand.

Observ. 5. When God is wrath with a people, he turns his sweetest mercies into the most terrible judgments.

The word of God's mouth, which is the staff and comfort of his people, he captures unto the voice of Trumpets, and as the roaring of many waters for terriblenes. When we keep close unto Christ, then all things are ours, Friends, Servants, Riches, children, and our Tables are mercies to us: But when we are become enemies to Christ by evil works, then Friends, Servants, Riches, Children, our Tables, and all are become snares unto us. When the King frowns on us, all his Courtiers and Nobles will do it also: Whilst God is our Friend all the whole creation will serve us freely; but if he frowns all will conspire and rebel against us: His Angels, whom he formerly commanded for our safety to pitch their Tents about us, will then be commanded to come with slaughter weapons against us. When a mans wayes please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him, *Prov. 16. 7.* *Babylon* could never have hurt *Zion*, till *Zion* had offended: When *Pergamus*, *Thyatira*, and the rest of the offending Asian churches forsake God, instead of the powerful sword of Christ's mouth, or word of grace, in convincing them of sin, and mortifying their corruptions, or speaking comfortably to them, he sends forth another word, a word of judgment and indignation, commanding their adversaries to go forth with their destroying weapons, either of War, Pestilence, or Famine, to sweep them off from the land of the living, that their place should be no more found. O therefore let us be sure to keep God our friend.

Vers.

Vers. 17. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.* To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden Manna, and will give him a white Stone, and in the Stone is now name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.

He that is wise and hath an understanding heart amongst you, let him consider those premonitions which I have so often inculcated, lest the judgments threatened for your sins overtake you; and therefore, hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden Manna; as if Christ had said, although I will come against the wicked ones in the church of *Pergamus* and fight against them with the sword of my mouth; yet, to him that overcometh, that is, that opposeth and escapeth the temptations of those pernicious doctrines amongst them, and keep themselves undefiled therein, so them will I give to eat of the hidden Manna. Here some difficulty or interpretation offers what is meant by this *hidden Manna*; many assert it to be Christ, which is that invisible food received by faith, according to *John 6. 32, 33, 34.* which cometh down from Heaven, and there typified forth by Manna; but, saving due reverence to the learned that goes that way, I cannot joyn with them singly in that Interpretation: for,

First, It is here called *hidden Manna*, or *strange Manna*, not as yet undiscovered, now Christ was the known and manifest spiritual food and Manna unto all believers; and so that of *John 6. 3.* is brought thereby to verifie it, and allude therunto.

Secondly, Every believer hath Christ already as his spiritual food and Manna, and therefore it is but a surplusage and tautologie to promise that as a crown and reward to the conquering faithful ones which they enjoy already, even from their first day, or in their lowest state of faith; therefore surely it must be somewhat more than Christ spiritually eaten by faith. Manna was the food that came down from Heaven that God gave to his children of *Israel* in the wilderness, *Exod. 16. 14, 15. &c.* And as Antiquity and Jewish Rabbies testifie, in the eating thereof is represented all sorts of meat to the taste that the appetite or curiosity could wish for; and therefore it was a fit Type for to represent Christ by, who was the true bread of life that could fill and answer all our necessities, and that he that should eat thereof should never hunger more: but this is a *hidden Manna*, a *strange* *feasted* *bread* of life, not yet made known by enjoyment that is here promised, it is but a variation of the former promises of a *crown of life* *ver. 10. 11.* and to eat of the *tree of life* in the *midst* of the *Paradise of God*, and *ver. 18.* *And I will give unto him the morning Star,*

Star, and write the name of my God upon him, and put on him the white rayment, &c. all these are but various expressions of the future eternal blessedness that the conquering Saints shall enjoy after the resurrection: And therefore this hidden Manna that is here promised to them to eat, is the enjoyment of Christ in such a hidden manner in that day, that it far passes our understanding for the excellency and the glory thereof, whose eating and participating will be then in a far higher Key, and on a more spiritual account, then now we can possibly in the state of weakness enjoy and comprehend; and therefore it is here called the hidden Manna; and as another additional degree of blessedness to this hidden Manna there is annexed, And will give him a white Stone, and in the Stone a new Name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it. Some take this Stone to be the Stone of free absolution and free justification by Christ, as having allusion to that ancient practise among those Common-weals that were govern'd by a Democratic, as Athens, Sparta, &c. who when any person was accused of a crime, they that absolved and acquitted him, cast into the pot a white Stone, and they that condemned him cast in a black Stone; and so according to the number of the Stones, the person was either acquitted or convicted: and that this was their judicious custome, Ovid testifies in his 15. Book of Metamor.

*Mos erat antiquis niveis astrisque lapillis.
His damnare res, illis absolvere culpâ:*

So in allusion to this practise say they, there is a free absolution and acquittance given to them that overcome, by Christ, and a white Stone given them wherein there is a new Name written, that no man knoweth but he that receiveth it; that is, say they, it is new and strange to the knowledg of those that have it not, or are in the state of nature, and no man hath any certain knowledge thereof but he that receives it. But this is not all that is promised to the conquering christian, for the white Stone of absolution and adoption, he hath in the very first day that he undertakes his christian combate by faith; for he can make no progress at all in this spiritual conflict, unless he hath first received the white Stone of justification, absolution, and adoption by faith: And though indeed no man knoweth the name and nature of this Stone savingly, but he that receiveth it; and so indeed unto the unregenerate and unbelievers this Stone hath a new name and nature written thereon, that they can have no certain knowledg of: But unto a believer and the faithful christian combatant, this white Stone of absolution and justification is no new thing unto them at all; for this white Stone that is here promised, is but an additional promise of other tearms, and variableness of expressions of that blessedness

blessedness that the overcoming christians shall enjoy in the world to come; therefore as unto them, it hath a new name also, and this expression hath rather allusion to that practise of the Anc ents, who were accustomed to give a certain white Stone with some such In-scription in it as *Detur Vincere*, to those that got the victory in plays and games, And this the Anc ents accustomed, as Aretus testifies, and we as yet retain some practices answerable thereunto; as when we set up a silver sword for the Master or conquering Fencer, a golden Ring for the best Dancer, a golden Cup for the best Racer or Shooter, or a Golden Ball for the best Runner. These are as several prizes set forth for him that overcometh in their respective games and pastimes amongst men. To which the spirit here does allude, and promiseth him that overcometh in his christian combate, the white Stone, wherein there is a new Name written, as a prize of his victory and conquest, and it is such a stone, that there is a new Name written thereon; that is,

First, There is such an excellent glory in this white Stone or prize of victory, that is as yet most strange and secret, and that never mortal eye yet saw, and so unspeakable, that the heart of man cannot conceive the glory thereof; for the Name of God is written on it, and of the City of God, and of the new Jerusalem that comes down from Heaven, cap. 3. 12. and no man can perfectly know or describe this glorious new State and Crown of life, or this prize of inestimable glory, this white Stone wherein this new name is written, but those that shall receive it in the last day. We know what manner of men we are at present, but we know not what manner of men we shall be that day, before it be revealed to us: we know now but in part, darkly, as in a glass, by medium, figures and resemblances, as a crown of life, white rayment, hidden manna, white stone, new name, and the like; but then we shall know it as we are known.

Secondly, This white Stone or prize of glory, is said here to have a new name written on it, in respect of the strangeness of the dispensation thereof: And this is Christ's own new name, which the world is yet ignorant of, cap. 3. 12. little do the world think to see the despicable and afflicted state of Christ and his Saints, that he hath another new Name for himself and them, that no man knew but he himself: cap. 19. 12. and what is that new Name? Peruse the subsequent verses, and you shall find, His eyes were as a flaming fire, and on his head were many crowns, and he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called the word of God, and out of his mouth goeth a sharp two edged sword, that with it he should smite the Nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of Iron; and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a Name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And the same new Name is here written upon the conquering Saints, and they are made co-partners with Christ in this his Kingdom; see the 26. and 27. vers. of this cap. and cap. 3. 12.

Is it not a strange and new thing think you, for the poor afflicted broken and despised christians, to receive this white Stone or price of victory, to sit down with Christ in His Throne and to rule the Nations with a rod of Iron? This is indeed a new thing and a new Name, both to themselves and others also; and yet it is here promised as a prize, crown, and reward of their faithful perseverance and conquest, which when they receive it, they shall fully know and comprehend it; but as yet it is a new Name written that no man knoweth but he that receiveth it. The Note hence is,

Observe. *That God hath reserved and treasured up unspeakable glory for his conquering Saints.*

It is a new Name that no man knoweth, a hidden Manna, a spiritual participating of Christ that is above our understanding; a new and joyn power given to us, by and with Christ, that we at present are utterly ignorant of; yea, it is such a prize of glory, that eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, or the heart of man cannot comprehend: And therefore in 2 Cor. 4. 17. it is called a most excellent and eternal weight of glory; and therefore here in this 2. and 3. cap. this prize, this crown of glory, is set forth under various and divers figures and resemblances, which are sensible and apt for our capacities; as ver. 7. under the Tree of life in the Paradise of God: ver. 10. under the expression of the Crown of life: ver. 17. of the hidden Manna, and white Stone, and new Name: ver. 26. of power over the Nations, and of the morning Star: in cap. 3. ver. 5. under the name of white Rayment, and Book of life: ver. 12. of a Pillar in the Temple of God, the Name of God, and the City of God: and in ver. 21. of sitting on the Throne, with Christ in his Throne, as Christ hath already sat down on the Father's Throne. All these expressions are taken up by the Spirit, to represent unto us the inestimable weight of glory, that is set forth as a prize, and treasured up by God for all faithful persevering and overcoming christians: And therefore let us all so run as we may obtain.

Use. But by the way here is an Use of Reproof, upon such that would now at present catch at the Crown before the coronation day: You must first overcome before you reign, unless you will reign without Christ; it is a hidden Manna, a new Name; it is not meat for this corrupt world, nor a work for this generation; It is a white Stone, wherein a new Name is written that yet no man knoweth; it is not a dispensation for this corrupt age, it is an excellent and eternal weight of glory, reserved for the new World, the Golden age, the new Jerusalem, the new Heaven and Earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and this will be produced in God's appointed time, by the almighty power and arm of Christ, who is the great captain, conductor and leader unto this glorious day; and therefore all such as pretend to lead and advance to this day other

otherwise than by a placid submission to the providential dispensations of God in the world, they only set up stumbling blocks for themselves and their followers to fall by: They that will rule with Christ must overcome with Christ; they that will sit with him in his Throne, must first pass to it as he did, by a conquest over sufferings and temptations, 2 Tim. 2. 12. Rom. 8. 17. If we suffer with Christ we shall reign with Christ; for this crown is gotten by the way of the cross; but to seek it by Swords, Pistols, Rapines, and Blood-sheds, you may obtain a crown and Kingdom in the World, from the Prince that ruleth in the Ayr, and the children of the World; but never from the Lamb that sitteth on the Throne. O therefore returne to this true Lamb of God and his Lamb-like condition, or else he will become a Lyon against you, and for your highmindedness and sins of rebellion and blood, will come against you quickly, and fight against you by the Sword of his mouth. O kis the Son least he be angry.

Ver. 18. *And unto the Angel of the Church of Thyatira write. These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet like fine bras.*

Here it is evident who 't is all along that gives these premonitions to each church, it is Christ the Son of God, who in the former verses is called the Spirit, for his spiritual appearance in the likeness of the Son of man. In the first cap. from vers. 13. to 16. this Son of God that appeared unto John in the likeness of the Son of Man in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, gives a general discovery of himself unto John in all his attributes, as God and Man, as King, Priest and Prophet, as the Saviour and Preserver of his church, also as a just Judge and avenger of his enemies. But now when Christ appears with the particular charges against each church, he takes as it were his attributes asunder, and cloaths himself with that attribute which is most suitable for the present condition of the church that he is to deal with. To the churches of Ephesus and Smyrna, which were the most sound and sincere, he appears under the attributes of a merciful Father who was dead and is alive, ver. 8. and of a gracious preserver of his church, ver. 1: who holdeth the seven Stars in his right hand; But now unto the churches of Thyatira and Pergamus, which were more debauched and unsound, Christ manifests himself in a far different resemblance and posture, having a Sword with two edges proceeding out of his mouth in his appearance towards the church of Pergamus, and here unto Thyatira, like one that hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet like fine (or burning) bras. This is a posture of indignation and wrath; for eyes sparkling like fire, betokeneth wrath; and feet like fine bras, readiness of execution

cution: Here Christ from head to feet is presented in a fiery colour: This is Christ's posture when he goes out in judgments against a church or Nation, when he goes out to war against his enemies, he puts on this fiery posture, *Rev. 19. 11, 12, 13.* See more hereon cap. 1. ver. 14, 15.

Observe. That when Christ goes out in judgment against a people, his appearance is very dreadful.

The Prophet Malachi speaking of the coming of Christ, when he comes who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like the Refiner's fire, and shall sit as a Refiner and purifier of silver cap. 3. 2, 3. A Refiner's fire is the hottest, it melts, purges, consumes, and is terrible; such a fire is Christ in his judgments: When he comes to destroy Antichrist and his Kingdom, *Paul* says, 2 Thess. 1. 8. *He shall come in flames of fire.* Have not most of our western Nations, as *Germany, France, England, Scotland, &c.* seen this terrible appearance of Christ of late in his judgments among us, who hath laid many Kingdoms and Nations almost in the dust, destroy'd many ancient Families, Houses, Cities, Townes and Countries by the Sword, and yet who lays it to heart? And yet Christ will be more terrible, for the great day of his wrath is at hand, and who will be able to stand? *Rev. 6. 17.* The great ones of the earth that are, found fighting against him, shall that day call for the Rocks and Mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of him that sits upon the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. This is the terrible and unknown name of Christ, which no man knoweth but Christ himself, which one day he will manifest, when all his enemies are made his footstool, and takes the Kingdom unto himself. O let this thy Kingdom come; and blessed is he that shall sit down with Christ in his Kingdom.

Observe. 2. Christ is very zealous and intense on the punishment of delinquent Churches.

Christ comes all in a fiery posture against *Thyatira*, and with all tells her, ver. 22 23. that for suffering *Jezebel* within her; *Behold I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great Tribulation, except they repent of their deeds: And I will kill her children with death, &c.* Christ when he whipped out of the Temple the buyers and sellers, *Jo. 2.* did it so zealously that for that very act it was formerly prophesied of him, *The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.* How zealous was Christ in his carriage, and ready to punish all those delinquent *Asian* churches? He tells *Ep. esus* in the first place, *Except she repent and recover her first love, and do her first works, he will come quickly and remove her candlestick out of its place.* To *Pergamus* he saith, *Repent or I come quickly against thee with the sword of my mouth.* How zealous was Christ against the zeal-fallen church of *Laodicea* cap. 3. 15,

I know thou art neither hot nor bold, I would thou wert bold or hot; for then because thou art lukewarm, I will spew thee out of my mouth. You see Christ will not spare his delinquent churches; but come quickly against them except they repent: And this proceeding of Christ with his Churches, answers to this appellation of his to *John;* who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and feet like burning brass; cap. 1. 14, 15.

Vers. 19. *I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works, and the last to be more than the first.*

All those graces here mentioned by the Spirit and found in the church of *Thyatira*, are to be understood of true real graces, not only so in appearance and opinion, but in truth and sincerity; and therefore Christ before he falls on the charge against her, first he gives an approbation and an encouragement to her graces, this in effect tells her: 'Tis true O church of *Thyatira*, I must acknowledg thy works of grace, as thy true love towards me, which hath produced and brought forth in thee the happy fruits of thy zealous service, and thy faith enlivened by love; together with thy constant patience under sufferings for my nation's sake; and by this it appeareth that thou hast received the truth in the love thereof; and withal I must add unto thy praise, that there is a growth and improvement in those gracious works, and the last to be more than the first: That is Though thy first works were done out of much zeal, yet the latter were done on more certain and sober grounds of knowledg and sincerer ends than the first; and therefore as thou hast made an improvement of thy graces, so thou art more in effect and thy works also, than at the first. By the way here,

Observe. We may Observe, Though the Church of *Thyatira* be never so blame-worthy, yet Christ will give her her due, and set her seal of approbation to all this is sound and righteous in her.

It seems there were graces sufficient in *Thyatira* to denominate her a golden candlestick and a church of Christ; notwithstanding Christ had a few things to say against her; it favors not of the Dove-like spirit of Christ and love, when any shall be so rigid as will not acknowledg such societies to be churches of Christ; because some imperfections in them either in doctrine or manners, though otherwise abounding in works of holiness, as love to God and his Saints, and faith towards Jesus Christ, zeal towards God's worship, and service, and in suffering for Christ's sake: Doubtless with some rigid persons in these days the churches of *Pergamus* and *Thyatira* would be unchurched and anathematized by them, had they but authority over them; though Christ had set his Seal upon them, and marked them as golden candlesticks: As in a natural body some members may be rotten and dead, and

yet a lively body: So in those spiritual bodies politiques, there may be some members rotten and dead at the root, yet the body still an organisical body, and no great hinderance to the whole. And again, in a natural body there may be a catolique disease seising upon every part and member of the body, which may render it very uncapable for its seruices, and yet still a lively body. So it may be in a church, a body politique; it may be catolique sick and infected with some venomous disease, some pestiferous doctrine or other; and yet a church still, though a decrepid, infirm, and lame one; but when the disease comes to be mortal, leprosous, or incurable, it is time then to cry out, *Sun impurus, sun impurus, Procul hinc, procul iste.*

For the words, *I know thy works, and thy love &c.* [Here we see the good works that God does approve of in his people, and does also render them as approved Saints, both unto themselves and the whole world. Christ alone is the publique approved person in the room of all his members in the sight of God, as unto justification and perfect righteousness: yet before these graces does appear in the Saints to evidence their calling, they are but the children of wrath as well as others. Election does secure our eternal estate; but before the spirit of grace comes to evidence it by faith that worketh by love, sin and death hath dominion over us: And though we are heirs of all in God's predetermination; yet differ we not at all from servants in the state of unregeneracy, yea therein we are slaves and captives to sin and Satan.

These gracious works are called *thy works*, though they are the gifts of God, and wrought by his spirit in us, yet God's goodness does call them ours, because they are acted by the instrumentality of our souls, as passing through our wills, affections and understandings; and here love or charity is put in the first place among all the graces of the Spirit: Whether love in order of nature is before faith, I shall not here dispute, only thus much I say that all generally grant, that faith's first act is an assent to the truth, as unto a proposition; now unless love come in to ingrediate the affection unto the truth proposed, it will only be but a bare opinion, and never come to a lively faith. Secondly, I say, love is here proposed as first in order, as being the most excellent Gospel grace, *1 Cor. 13.* throughout. Now abideth faith, hope and charity, but the greatest of them is charity; its precedence lies in this,

1. In that it perfumes and enlivens all the other graces; faith it self is dead without it; And to suppose a faith without love, is to suppose a man without a soul: The gifts of prophecies, tongues, and miracles, are but barren and useles things without this.

2. This hath for its object both God and Man; we exercise our faith and hope only towards God and his promises, but our charity is extended both towards God and Man: And therefore love

love is called, *Rom. 13. 10.* το πλήρην την πίστην, the fulfilling of the Law; it is the whole sum and hinge on which the commandments turn: In this one word charity, both the Tables of the decalogue are abridged.

3. It excells in that it is the greatest note of our interest in God and Christ: Faith is that giveth right unto the promises, but love is that giveth life to faith: It is the very soul of all our graces; *If we gave our bodies to be burnt for Christ and had not charity, it will profit nothing, 1 Cor. 13. 3.* By this we know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the Brethren, *1 John 3. 14.* and *1a. 1. 12.* The Crown of life is promised to them that love God, and *Rom. 8. 28.* Love is made the very discovery of effectual calling and election.

4. Love excells in that it is the perfection of the Law, it is the very end of the Commandments, *1 Tim. 1. 5.* and were Love but perfect in us, it would make us perfect Keepers and Observers of the Law both towards God and Man. Love knits the Members of Christ's Body together, and so perfects his Body: It unites us to God, and so maketh the perfecting of divine love in us, *1 John 4. 12, 17.* and here it is we are commanded twice to put on love above all things, *1 Pet. 4. 8.* and *Col. 3. 14.* but once above all things to take the shield of faith.

5. And lastly, when faith, hope, patience, and all other graces ceaseth, charity abideth. Love is not only a portion for the Saints in this life, but in the other also; then we shall love God and Christ when faith and hope ceaseth; therefore justly did Christ in this place, and the Apostle in *1 Cor. 13. 13.* give it the precedence above all other Graces of the Spirit.

2. Love brings forth another grace, service, external worship, and obedience; him whom we love we obey, we serve, we honour and worship: The service of love is most intense and effectual. When Christ communed with Simon Peter, *John 21.* and asked him thrice, *Simon Son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Tell Lord thou knowest it,* faith Peter; Christ answered feed my sheep: The more love that Peter manifested, the more service and duty was put upon him. Services that we perform to God, not out of love, but formality or custome, are but as scabbed or lame sacrifices under the Law, which the Lord hated. Right ends in our services are,

First, Love and zeal to God's glory.

Secondly, Love to the obedience of God's commandments.

Thirdly, Love to the edification of others.

These ends makes us a true and sincere worship, love goeth through all, and is the fulfilling of the Law.

3. Thyatira is approved for her faith, made lively and effectual by love. True faith is never separated from love, they go hand in hand together; but love hath the precedence for the reasons

sons aforesaid, though faith is first in order of nature; for faith is that grace that gives the first being unto a christian, but love is the perfection of that being: There must be first a knowledge of God, and assent unto his truths, which is the first act of faith, before we can love that God or his Truths; but withal I say, there is so inseperable union between these two graces, no sooner hath faith a being and a body, but love comes to animate it, to make it sound, lively and perfect.

Observe. hence Note, *That it is not a bare opinion or entertainment of the truth, that is a true lively faith, but that that worketh by love.*

Many will one day say, we have prophesied in thy Name, taught in thy Name, cast out devils in thy Name, professed and believ-ed thy truths; and yet the Lord will say unto them, *I know you not;* and all for want of this grace of love towards God and his Saints. A sound and true faith contains in it these three prin-cipal ingredients, that gives the very form and being to it.

First, A sound distinct knowledge of the thing believed: *I know and am persuaded,* saith Paul, Rom. 14. 14. Persons that are ignorant of Gods promises, and of the word of eternal life, can never believe aright.

Secondly, A firm persuasion strongly assuring the heart. As a sound believer must not be an ignorant soul, so must he not be a wavering-minded man, but must have an undecievable certain-ty and truth in that he does believe.

Thirdly, A confident resting and rejoicing with satis-faction unto the Soul, surely looking to enjoy that it does believe.

True faith hath these four acts and degrees in it, 1. Knowledge, 2. Assent. 3. Adherence. and 4. Assurance. A believer may have the three first acts, and want the latter; and a sound believer and a justified person. Though God for causes to himself known may never give the grace of Assurance, yet that faith that only knows God distinctly to be a God of salvation in his promises, to repentant sinners through Christ, and so takes him and adheres unto him in the love and truth thereof, doubtless that soul shall never be a cast-away, though God's presence of assurance and joyful satisfaction be never manifested unto him. If we be-saved it is enough, though God reserves his comfortable presence and inward love for us unto another world.

4. *Thyatira* hath another excellent grace, and that is Patience, or sufferance with patience, as the word *τέλειωσις* carries it in the Greek. A wicked man may suffer affliction, but not suffer with patience, without murmuring, swearing, or blaspheming as the godly doth. The wicked may have patience perforce and unwillingly, when he cannot help it, the affliction being above his reach to remedy; but the godly is patient as it is an effect of love; because

because he loveth much, he is ready to suffer much with constancy and patience, as *Jacob* served two seven years hardship for his beloved *Rachel*; so a faithful soul is ready to suffer all afflictions, chearfully, and with much patience all the years of his life, be-cause he loves God and Christ, and so accounts the afflictions of this life not to be valued with the glory that shall hereafter be re-vealed to all those that love God.

5. *Thyatira* was a growing fruitful church, her latter works were more then her first, done upon better grounds, and better prin-ciples. From whence Note,

Observe. *That the gracious works of the more grown Christians doe exceed those of the younger sort in soundnes.*

The Neophites or young Christians may be more zealous then the approved Presbiteres of a church; but the latter zeal is better regulated and more sober then the former: *When I was a child* (saith Paul) *I spake as a child, I did as a child, I understood as a child;* but when I became a man I put away childish things: So it is in our spi-ritual growth, in our first birth; we are very childish, and zealous of small things; external circumstances in worship, we then look upon as great things; and if a painted window, a cross, a supple, a cope, &c. stand in our way we presently stumble at them, and think it the most acceptable service we can perform to God, either to burn them, or break them to peices as Antichti-stian trumperies. Again, if we come a little higher, then we spend most or all our strength about the defence of external forms of worship; as whether Presbitery, Independency, or the way of the Anabaptists so called, be the righter way. This humour too is most prevalent in the Neophites; but the waightier things of God and his Law, is for the elder and stronger sort: The one thinks to catch Heaven by Tything Mint and Annis, by being very intense about the smaller things of the Law; but the other leaving the first undone, falls upon the kernel and substance of Religion, which is fit meat for stronger men. The grown christian's graces excels the younger, as his love is more sound; he loves not for interest or opinion sake; as many young ones do; but he loves the brethren, on this ground as being members of one body, being made partakers of the same divine truth with himself.

Seconly, His service is more cordial in respect of the larger experience of the goodness of God to his Soul, he hath often met God's presence in his ordinances, then the younger christian hath; and therefore needs must his desires and affections excell unto God's Ordinances and worships, seeing he hath often met God therein, as in a special habitation of his glory.

Thirdly, An old christian's faith is sounder then the younger; he believes not because he hath heard only with the ear; but he be-lieves because he hath seen, tasted; and experienced the truth and faith-

faithfulness of God and his promises to his soul, which the other it may be as yet has not attained too.

Fourthly, His patience is more tryed, more refined then the younger.

Fifthly, and lastly, In este& all his graces are sounder and better circumstantiated then those of the younger christians, for ends, for grounds, for manners, for time, and in all other circumstances whatsoever: Therefore it is our duty to strive, that our last works may be more then our first; otherwise shame unto us as unprofitable servants.

Vers. 20. Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth her self a Prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto Idols.

Yet nevertheless O thou church of *Thyatira*, though I do approve and encourage thy gracious works of love, faith, seruice, and patience, and commend thee for thy proficiency in the m; yet I have a few things, certain offences to lay in charge against thee. Hence Note,

Observ. If our sins be few and great, though our graces be many and eminent, yet God will come against us for them: Few great and scandalous sins, are as dead flies in precious Ointment, it will defile the whole box of spiritual graces.

God will not Inhabit quietly and at peace in one mansion with sin and wickedness. *If Ephraim will have Idols, God will let him alone:* And if *Israel* will uphold wickedness (though his own peculiar people, who were abounding in sacrifices and holy ser-vices,) yet that shall not priviledge them from a Babylonish captivity. If his own select people will turn wild Olives and crucifie the Lords Prophets and his Christ; he can cut them off, and make them a desolate and dispersed people, upon the face of the whole earth. *Thyatira* had many excellent graces, and so had *Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, &c.* yet for their sins (and especially those of Idolatry and Fornication, the corrupt doctrines of *Balaam, Jezebel, and the Nicolaitans*) God came against them in judgment and fiery indignation, and removed his candlesticks from amongst them, and left them desolate. If we conceive our graces of Faith, Love, Service, &c. will secure us from the wrath of God, though we admit Antichristian doctrines of Idolatry, false and evil worships among us, we shall be much deceived. Doubtless many of our former Bishops were very godly men, as *Jewell, Downham, Usher, Hall, Davenants, &c.* yet their real graces and holines, could not stop the hand of God in going forth in wrath against the Antichristian practises and false worships

worships tolerated and allowed in the churches of *England* and *Wales*; only could deliver their own souls; but they themselves ~~were~~ ^{14 Anti-scripto-} main, and the whole function shall smart for it in the day of all Lord's indignation; and though some of them were godly and pious men, yet for their tolerating and conniving at false doctrines and worships, they themselves shall suffer in the common judgment, but their pious and gracious souls shall be saved so as by fire; not that of Purgatory first kindled in the Popes Kitchen; but by the fire of afflictions sanctified unto them by that fire of purging and cleansing away our dross, to wit, God's Spirit and Word. We are therefore to look to it how we admit offences amongst us; though they be but few; they may draw God into judgment against us; and though they may not at present unchurch us, yet if held unrepented of, they may provoke God to come against us quickly with the sword of his mouth. O let no man plead for toleration of sin, false doctrines or worships from the Primitive practises or presidents of the first churches; so as they sinned first in these particulars, so they were made the first examples of God's wrath and justice. It is but a sad saying of some, That their present churches are as sound, straight and holy as the Primitive ones: They had their drunkards, incestuous fol-lowers of the doctrine of *Balaam, the Nicolaitans, and Jezebel*; and we, say they, in our Parochial churches have not worse. Alas! they are now made unto us examples of God's righteous judgments for those and the rest of their sins, and their very habi-tations given unto the cursed Mahometans, and their off springs turned Barbarians and Heathens; and if we be found in the same sins and transgressions with them, O, May we not fear the same desolating judgment; Let us not contemn the long-suffering of God, but speedily repent and do our first works: So far should we be from boasting on that account, that it should rather be unto us just matter of grief and sorrow. But to proceed,

The charge against *Thyatira* was, *That thou sufferest the woman Jezebel who calleth her self a Prophetess to teach and deceive my servants &c.* This woman *Jezebel* here mentioned, doubtless was a she Prophetess of the *Nicolaitans*, and that she was one of that Sect, is evident from this, that she comes with the same cursed Nicolaitish doctrines in the 14: and 15. verses mentioned, teach-ing and drawing God's people to Idolatry and Fornication. First, herein appears her impudence, who contrary to the modesty of her sex and Apostolical prohibition, yet she takes the name of a Prophetess upon her self, and to teach publickly contrary to the Apostle, 1. Cor. 14: 34. Next observe her falsity and deceit; she is a Prophetess, and why, it is only to deceive and seduce Christ's Servants. Thirdly, observe the ways and means of her seductions, it is by false doctrines, by teaching Idolatry, and communicating in the Sacrifices of Idols, and Fornications to be

things indifferent, for I always take these to be two great distinct sins and errors of the Nicolaitans, Idolatry and Fornication; and not only Idolatry, which is a spiritual Fornication or Adultery, for Balaam's advice was not only that the children of *Israel* in the business of Baal Peor, *Mumb.* 25. 1, 2. should fall to Idolatry, but to fornication also with the Midianitish women; so also *Jezebel*, *Ahab*'s wife, who provoked him to set up Idolatry unto *Baal* in *Israel*, 1 *King.* 16. 31, 32, compared to 1 *King.* 21. 25. was also a notable Adulteress, as by that of 2 *King.* 9. 22. What peace whilst the woredoms of thy Mother *Jezebel* and her witch-crafts are yet in great number, and her carriage being accordingly impudent ver. 30. doth convince her whoredom; for she painted her face, and tyred her head, and looked out at window; the posture rather of a Strumpet then of Majesty, as some would have it: And therefore *Balaam* and *Jezebel* are here fitly brought in by the Spirit to personate this lewd Nicolaitish Sect, and their great Propheteſſes in the church of *Thyatira*.

Obſerv. 1. Hence Note. *That it is no new deſigne of Satan's to trouble the Church with false ſhe Propheteſſes.*

As there were false Prophets Balaamites and Nicolaitans in the church of *Pergamus*, so there was a false Prophet and a very impudent one of the same Sect in *Thyatira*. If God will have he or the Prophets the Devil will be God's Ape, and will have the same: If God to honor that weaker Sex, sometimes raised up the Prophets to help his people, be ſure the Devil will be upon the ſame work, he will have his *Jezebels* his *Maximillae* for her ſervice also. We find in *Ezekiel*'s days there were false Propheteſſes who ſowed Pillows to the Arm-holes, 13. 1k. 18. Prophetaſſed pleaſing things unto the people; and *Neb.* 6. 14. there is mention made of one *Noadie* a Propheteſſe, ſhe with other false Prophets, Prophetaſſed againſt the building of the Temple, encouraged *Sanballat* and endeavoured to diſcourſe *Nebemiah*, and the builders of it: And ſome ſuch there were and will be in all ages, who with their false doctrines will deceiver unwaried people; *Simon Magus* had his *Helena*, *Carpocrates* his *Marcellina*, *Montanus* had his *Prisca* and *Maximillina*; and ſo all erronious Sects hath their ſhe Propheteſſes as well as he Prophets; for the Devil's deſigne thrives on both ways.

Obſerv. 2. *False ſhe Propheteſſes are not only very bold, but very ſubtile to deceiver and ſeduce God's ſervants from the truth.*

And therefore they are likned to *Jezebel*, a bold ſetter up of Idolatry and a subtile deceiver, as in the business of *Naboth*, and ſeeking the death of the true Prophets, appeareth. And it appeareth also hence, that this false Nicolaitish Propheteſſe was not only a very impudent one, for ſhe calls herſelf a Propheteſſe to teach, but was also a very ſly and subtile one, or else ſhe could not be ſaid to deceiver Christ's ſervants. I conjecture that her practice

practise was ſomewhat like the ranting Familifts and Anti-scripturists of our days, who pretending ſome high notions and exalted matters, above the common pitch of plain and wholſome doctrine, and ſo flying beyond ſobriety, God suffers them to fall into the ſnare of Satan, and to deny the Law of God as a rule to them, and to ſtand in awe to ſin is but of a legal ſpirit and of bondage and ſin, cannot at all reach God or offend his Majesty, and then they can freely among the Heathens, as the Nicolaitish christians did of old, partake of the Sacrifices of *Baalg*, of *Bacchus*, *Priapus*, *Venus*, or any of their Heathenish Idols, and can freely without regret eat of their idolothries, and joyn and commix with their corporal fornications alſo: High and impudent ſequallations and novelties carries the viſor of deceipt with them; whole ſome doctrine is old and plain, but novel and erroneous is held forth in moſt high and unintelligible motions, which fake Prophets and Prophetiſſes on purpoſe make uſe of to amuse, confound, enſnare, and deceiver the ealy credulous and ſimple people; many of theſe fake the Prophetiſſes goes up and down with their new Light, new Christ, and new Gospel, and all within them in theſe very days of ouſis a true branch of the old Gnosticks and Nicolaitans.

Obſerv. 3. *Some of God's own faithful Servants may be deceiver and carried away by the Doctrines of false Teachers.*

This *Jezebel*, or fake Lady Prophetiſſe, had ſeduced Christ's Servants, and had entiſed them to their filthy Idolatries and Adulteries; we know *Peter* and *Barnabas* were drawn away by ſuch into error, *Gal.* 2. 13, 14. The old lying Prophet deceiver the young Prophet of God and drew him into a ſnare which cost him his life; for a Lion devoured him, 1 *King.* 13. Christ hath foretold us, *Mat.* 24. That many false Prophets shall arife and deceiver many; But whence do they arife? From the bottomeſ of the Pit, and do raife ſuch a ſmoake with their fake doctrines, *Rey.* 9. that they darken the Heavens, that is, the Gopel truths ſtar the Saints cannot clearly ſee their ways, and therefore not ſtrange if they ſtumble. Did not many precious Souls ſtumble in the late days of Prelacy, and were turned away with their errors, and have not many ſtumbled in theſe days of liberty, and carried away and deceiver by Familiftical, Anti-scriptural errors and the like: But ſeeing theſe things are ſo, let us hearken to the advice of *Peter* 2 *Epif.* 3. 17, 18. Beware leſt ye alſo, being led away with the errors of the wicked, fall from their own ſteadableness: But grow in grace and in the knowledg of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

But to return to, the charge which was againſt *Thyatira*, and it was because ſhe ſuffered the woman *Jezebel*. A church is not ſo blame worthy for having a *Jezebel*, a fake Prophet or Prophetiſſe among them, but for ſuffering, for countenancing, owning, and freely tolerating of them; this was the crime of this church of *Thyatira*. Whence Note, Cc 2. Obſerv.

Observe. That the toleration and indulgence of false Teachers in a Church, is a great evil.

Surely it is not the way of God nor his will, to suffer opinions in a church, that are dissonant from his truth, that will corrupt the soul with sin: Though I should plead for a just liberty for tender consciences in points disputable, and therein are not to be forced against their judgments by any outward power, to external conformity; for that indeed is the way to bring them into the Unity of uniformity, but not into the Unity of the truth; it is a way to make Hypocrites, not Saints: Yet nevertheless I should not offer to open my mouth for a licentious liberty of pernicious doctrines or practises, that are blasphemous, idolatrous against God or his worship or the power of godliness; let such bear their censures and punishments, not only that which is spiritual and of Gospel warrant, but that of the Magistrates sword also, he is *castos nstrisque tabula*: And to this end he beareth the Sword not in vain. But I would always forelay this caution, That none whose lives are sober and godly and desire to live peaceably with all in this present world for difference in judgment, should be ensnared hereby. But for a very little space should we suffer a *Jezebel*, and impudent, immodest or idolatrous false Teacher in a church, we should not bear with it an hour, for that which God has really declared himself against from Heaven, we should be adversaries to it also, and that which God hath a controversy with, and is against, must needs be a great evil; and the great evil of tolerating false Teachers in a church, appears clearly in these particulars,

Firstly, In that they blaspheme God and his authority, saying, the Lord sent them and spake unto them, when the Lord never appeared to them.

Secondly, They cross God in his designes: God calls his people to holiness, peace and unity, but false Teachers set up some ungodly Doctrines or Practises to the undoing of Souls.

Thirdly, They sadden the hearts of the righteous by their lies and vanities.

Fourthly, They corrupt the souls of God's servants, they deceive them and entice them into the snares of their abominations.

Fifthly, They provoke God to become an enemy to such Assemblies as do embrace them or own them, and finally undo poor souls for ever, without repentance.

Quest. If a free toleration of false Teachers is so great an evil in a church, the Question will be, In whose power is it lawfully and juridically to remove them?

Ans. Doubtless the particular church of *Thyatira* that had the check, and against whom alone Christ layd the charge for tolerating

rating the woman *Jezebel*, had the sole power of removing the evil from amongst them: For what an unreasonable thing would it be, that God should lay the charge of this sin against *Thyatira* for tolerating *Jezebel*, were it not in the churches power there within themselves, to remedy, remove and eject that false Prophetess. Christ never blames any one of those seven churches for the sins that are suffered in another; not the church of *Pergamus* for the sins of *Thyatira*, nor *Thyatira* for the sins of *Sardis* or *Laodicea*, but every one are charged particularly for their own sins: Neither are the more pure churches of *Ephesus*, *Smyrna*, or *Philadelphia*, empowered, commanded or authorised, either joyned in a combination, as a Classical Presbiter, or singly, as a Prelatical Superintendent over the rest, to remove or reform the evils among the rest; but every one is commended apart for their respective graces, and every one by it self is commanded to repent and reform apart from their sinful doctrines and practises. In the days of those seven churches, and some ages after, there was no mention of a Lording Episcopacy or Presbiter over many churches of Christ at once; but that every particular church of Christ had then full power and jurisdiction within themselves all alike and of one extent within their own boundaries, and that superiority in churches came in with the defection and falling away, which was fomented and nourished by the pride of the Bishops, till at last it became purely Antichristian. We know all churches are sisters, and therefore equal in power and priviledges, under one spiritual head, that is Christ, Gal. 1. 18. *Par in parem non habet imperium*, Equals can have no power over equals, unless by usurpation or tyranny, or otherwise by compact; if it be only by compact and agreement, as when amongst our selves and equals, we chuse our Parliament men to be our Legislators and Rulers; but if so churches that are of equal authority get a power into their own hands by agreement among themselves, over the rest of their sister churches, call it what you will, either Classical, Provincial or National, surely at best, it is but of a prudential and civil Institution, and to give it a divine stamp is more then it will bear, peruse cap. 2. vers. 2. last part, where the Spirit says to the church of *Ephesus*, *Thou canst not bear them which are evil, and thou hast tryed them which say they are Apostles and are not, and thou hast found them liars*: M. Perkins on that vers. says, To the church of *Ephesus*, God gave a full juridical power either to admit or keep out, examine or cast out, suspend, or do any other judicial act or acts whatsoever, that was needful in a true church of Christ.

The Apostles write in all their Epistles to the respective churches as distinct churches, without dependency upon any but upon Jesus Christ their Head, King and Sovereign, Act. 15. 22. 1 Cor. 5. 4, 5. Rom. 1. 6, 1. Col. 1. 2, 24. Ephes. 5. 24. They being

being all the body of Christ under one head, the Spouses of Christ to one Husband, Sisters of one Mother, *Cant. 8. 8.* none of them are servants or slaves to the other, not *Hagars* but *Sarahs*, free and equal, all of them are spouses of Christ, of equal priviledges and authority; all of them are golden candlesticks, shining churches amongst whom Christ equally walketh, *Rev. 1. 12.* all having equal and like power of opening and shutting, admitting and rejecting, receiving or denying. And for one church to usurp authority over another, is at best but a *Diotrephe's*-like spirit, and of a Prelatical humour, which doe very little comport with the truth of these Scriptures, *Mat. 16. 16. Act. 9. 26. 14. 23. Rev. 2. 2. Act. 1. 15, 6, 2, 3. Mat. 18. 17, 18. 1 Cor. 5. 4, 5. 2 Cor. 2. 5, 6.*

Ques. 2. But another Question may hence arise, Whether the Angel of the Church of *Thyatira*, chief Officer, Pastor or Minister, could alone remove this *Jezebel* legally and judicially without the consent of the church and fraternity which were in fellowship with him? Or whither that which is called the power of the Keys be singly in the Officer's and Eldership, or joynly in the whole body of the church, Elders and Brethren together?

I Answer. First, understand the power of the Keys, that is the signe being put for the thing signified, the Keys, the ensigne of Authority, for Authority it self: And this Authority is either,

First, Supream and Monarchical; and this resides only in Christ, as he is sole King and Law-giver of his church, and so he is head of the body, and he hath the Keys of *David*, and openeth and no man shutteth, shutteth and no man openeth, *Rev. 3. 7.* and so he hath the power both in heaven and earth, and executes the office of a headship and none but him, *1/a. 9, 6. Col. 1. 18. Ephes. 5. 23.*

Secondly there is a delegated or Ministerial power which is given by Christ to his church; and this is,

1. Either the power of judgment and election. Or,
2. Of Office and Authority. The whole body hath power of choosing, admitting, receiving, or of rejecting and censuring, and so the whole is above any particular Member or Officer.

But Secondly the power of Office is not in the Multitude, but in some one or more, as Pastors, Elders and the like, which they have called to this Authority and Ministerial offices, and so are in a higher Authority, though inferior to the whole, then any other private members whatsoever: So that whatsoever the whole church does judicially act or censure, the power of Office is to precede therein and all what is done thereby, it is still *in ordine ad Ecclesiam*. And hence it is evident that the power of judgment and censuring, is not a power of Office in the Brethren over their Elders as some would object, but a distinct power, and the one is

is essential to a church as that of judgment, but that of *e and Rule* is meerly accidental, and it may be or not be in a church, *sine interitu subiecto*. So hence it is evident that the whole church of *Thyatira* had the essential power of the Keys in her Officers and Fraternity as in one origanical body joynly together, for the removing of this woman *Jezebel*; for how unreasonabla a thing is it to conceive that the Spirit of God should lay a chose upon the whole church of *Thyatira* for suffering the *Idolatries* of *Jezebel* amongst them, if it were not in theirs but in the Officers power alone for the removal of them? We should think him a hard Father or Master if not somewhat sensless and beside himself, that would would whip all his children and servants with stripes for the neglects, miscarriages and faults of the chief Steward of the house; and shall we judge this a hard matter amongst the sons of men? And shall we not judge it far from the wisdom of God and his merciful dealings towards us, that he should put a check upoh us and come *against us* in wrath and judgment for tolerating evils among us which is not in our power to reform or remedy? Far be these conceits from our thoughts and judgments concerning God and his righteous judgments towards us. Doubtless the whole combined church of *Thyatira* had power to remove her scandals although the charge is superscribed *The Angel of the Church of Thyatira wrote I know thy love thy service thy faith and thy patience, notwithstanding I have somewhat against thee.* The Pastors Officers or Ministers are God's Angels, they receive from God his messages and deliver them to the people; they are a it were God's mouth unto them, and acquaint them with the mind of God, what God hath to say unto them, either for their encouragement, or for their reprehension: So this check and message here was not laid or sent only on the Angel or Pastor of *Thyatira* but on the whole church, *Col. 1. 11. Hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches*: The Angel was but the hand and instrument for to receive it, and though he should first move and lead to the removoving and censuring of this Harlot *Jezebel*, and yet be negligent rmis and dormant therein; that shall not excuse this church if they be found guilty with him in the same sinful connivance and compliance; for, *I will give unto every one of you (faith Christ) according to their works*: If you will indulge and comply with *Jezebel* and her cursed doctrines, you shall suffer with her but if you shall overcome and escape her falsities, you shall have a crown of life. The power of judgment and censuring is in the Officers only directively, but in the whole church *formaliter* and *effectually*; the whole church cannot act out of office, neither can the Officers or Presibters act in judgment or censuring without the aprobation and assent of the church and fraternity. Mr. *Rutherford* the great learned champion for Presiberty, writes thus, in favour of this way and judgment: *Lib. 1. pag. 49. Here grave* *Reza*

Beza, our Divines, *Calvin, Bucer, Bullinger, Melancthon, Bucer, Pareus, Rivetus, Sibrandus, Iunius, Trelcatius*: The Fathers, *Cyprian, Jerome, Augustine, Nazianzen, Chrysostome, Ambrose, Theodoret, Theophilact*, require all to be done (to wit, about excommunication and censuring) *plebe consentiente*; and why should their consent be desired, if the Elders would do it without the consent of the people? *Peter Martyr* is peremptory in his *Common Places Sect. 9. Unde concluditur, non absque commensa Ecclesiæ quenquam excommunicari posse.* And this hereon shall suffice: see more formerly in the 2 vers. of this cap.

Ver. 21. *I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not.*

Ver. 22. *Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit Adultery with her, into great tribulation; except they repent of their deeds.*

Though the church of *Thyatira* was very faulty in suffering the false doctrines of *Jezebel* within her, and though the abominations of this false Prophets were highly provoking sins against the justice of God, yet God was pleased to give unto this false Prophet, and to the church that entertained her, a space, not a little, but a long tract of time, to repent of her spiritual and corporal fornications; and yet she slighting the long suffering of God, which should lead her to repentance, and the repented not: whereupon Christ lays an Index, a mark, an Asterisme upon her, not such a mark as he lays on his elect ones of love and favour; but the contrary, of wrath and indignation. *Behold*, as much to say, as let all see, take notice, & admire of the righteous judgment I am going about to pour forth on this false impenitent Prophet and her adherents; *I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her, into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.* As she hath played the Harlot under her green covertures, both in her idolatries and adulteries, and as she made her bed the place of her abominations, so I will cast her into another bed, a bed of my own making, not of Doun, or of wanton dalliance, but a bed of affliction, a bed of tribulation, and of much anguish: If nothing will cure her, if she will not hearken to my gracious precautions, if she will not repent for all my gracious dealings and long sufferings towards her, I will cast her into a bed, I will make her sick unto the very heart, it shall be a bed of great tribulation, and if all this will not prevail with her to reform and amend, I will cast her into another bed, a bed of death; and not only her, but all that commit adultery with her; she alone shall not suffer for her adulteries and idolatries, but all those whom she hath enticed and deluded to be sharers and complices with her in these her abominations. Hence Note,

Observ.

Observ. 1. *God is very long suffering and merciful towards the worst of sinners.*

God gives this woman *Jezebel*, most corrupt in doctrine and manners, a space, a long space or tract of time to repent: God forbore the old sinful world a long time under the preaching of *Noah*, before he brought the Flood upon them, to sweep them away for their transgressions: God suffered long also *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, most vile cities in abominations, before he sent forth fire from heaven to consume them: How long did God suffer the provocations of his own people *Israel*, in idolatries, murmurings, oppressions, injustices, adulteries, &c. from one age to another, before he would remove the habitation of his glory from *Israel*, yea after they had put the Son of God to death, through their wicked malice and enmity towards him; yet how willing was God to call them to repentance, by sending his Apostles and Ministers among them, to bring them to the faith, if possible, and lo be saved: and waited long upon this work, for fifty, sixty years, and upward, until the days of *Vespasian*, when *Titus* overthrew the city of *Jerusalem*, when the Jews were sold for a groat a head, and not one stone left upon another in the Temple, as Christ had foretold for their obstinate impenitency and wickedness! How long did God forbear us in this Land for the abominations among us; sins of *Jezebel* of a bloody nature against the Saints and Prophets of God, besides the many superstitious Will-worships, idolatries, and fornications permitted and countenanced, as it were by authority, for some series of years, before the Lord did break out against us in wrath and judgment? All this connotes unto us the gracious nature of our God, that he is a God merciful, gracious, long-suffering, full of bowels of compassion, ready to forgive and remit the very worst of sinners, as persecutors, idolaters, adulterers, *Jezebels*, *Balaamites*, *Nicholaitans*, and what not? upon their repentance, and turning from their sinful ways unto God and holiness: Therefore, (O sinner!) never complain against God for want of grace or long-suffering towards thee, if thou perish, the fault is thine own, through thine own perverseness and unbelief, and not God's; for want of grace, mercy, or giving time enough of repentance to thee.

From the remarkable word, *Behold*, Note,

Observ. 2. *That Gods judgments upon sinners are to be remarked and taken notice of by all wise and godly persons.*

Behold! saith Christ, what I am bringing upon *Jezebel* and her wicked associates, for their abominations: consider of it, it is for an example to you, that if you be found in the same transgressions with her, you shall be partakers with her in her judgments. God always forewarns of evils before they are coming; that his own precious ones may be secured and saved in the day of wrath: in *Rev. 18. 2*, the Angel cries out with an *Ecc! Babylon is fallen,*

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*Babylon is fallen, many hundreds of years before the real accomplishment thereof, and to what end? That the godly may consider and take notice of her abominations, and of the wrath and judgments denounced against her, that so they may com^{out} of her, and not be partakers with her sins, lest they be partakers with her plagues also: How many voices of the Lord's Messengers, and Trumpets, are gone forth with a *Behold* in their mouths, that the Lord is coming in fiery indignation against all workers of iniquity, and yet who lays it to heart?*

Observe. 3. It is most just with God when he makes the occasions and instruments whereby we have sinned against God, to be the instruments of our punishments and chastisements.

If we turn our Tables into surfeiting and drunkenness, it is just with God to make them a snare unto us. If we make wine, or our lusts our god, God can make wine and our lusts to be our executioners, in shortening our days by intemperancy. If we make gold, riches, or honour our *Dalilah*, God may justly lay a wedge of gold in our way, as he did to *Achan*, or honour, as unto *Abaddon*, unto our utter ruine and destruction. If *Jezebel* affects her bed and clothe covertures for her whoredoms and idolatries, God can justly make that bed of folly, a bed of great tribulation to her. If we please our selves in the society of evil companions, those very comforts of ours, God will make them gods of affliction to us; for how bad will it be unto the wicked in the last day, when those that were companions in sin and wickedness, shall curse one another for their wicked examples and encouragements to evil given to one another in their life time. Thus God punishes sin by sin. If *Pharaoh* will have a hard heart against the Israel of God, God will give *Pharaoh* a hardened heart in judgment: God hath his hand so far in us, that justice he can turn it to a punishment for sin; and this is according to the equity of that of the Poet:

Non Lex est iustior illa,

quam nec artifices arte persire sua.

Observe. 4. Great and grievous tribulations and judgments attend not only false Teachers themselves, but their followers also.

The Bed in the days of health, peace and quiet, is the place of solace, rest, and comfort; but in the day of affliction, sickness, or tribulation, it is the receptacle of our grief, sorrow, and anguish: *All the night long (Psalm David) I suffer my Cross with my tears*; and therefore most aptly taken up by the Spurie to represent unto us a state of sorrow, anguish, and tribulation in *Jezebel*, and her adherents or followers of her doctrine, shall be cast, for so her adulterers are to be understood. You cannot think it reasonable, though this Nicolaitish Prophetess did hold corporal fornication lawful, yet that all of her Sects and followers of her doctrine did commit corporal fornication with her, but that all such as were her disciples and followers, may be truly said to commit adultery,

Adultery with her in a spiritual sense and understanding: And so in cap. 17. ver. 2. The Kings of the earth are said to commit Fornication with the great Whore, and the Inhabitants of the earth to be made drunken with the wine of her fornication, that is, with the intoxicating and abominable Doctrines and Idolatries of *Babylon*: So here all that do adulterize with *Jezebel*, that is follow and joy to her abominable doctrines and practices, shall be cast into the same bed of anguish and tribulation with her self. They that will partake of *Babylons* sins, must not think it hard to partake of *Babylons* plagues; the Merchants that joyned to her Idolatrous Merchandizings & trade, shall cry, *Alas, alas!* for that great City; and the Kings of the earth that committed Fornication with her, shall bewaile her and lament because of the anguish come upon her. cap. 18. The Beast and false Prophet, joyned companions in evil, the one upholding and confirming the other, the one by an unrighteous and tyrannical Sword, the other by false doctrines and miracles, till at last both are caught by Christ and his Armies, and cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, Rev. 19. 20: And if common tribulations were not enough for false teachers and their followers, Christ will cast them into a bed wherein they shall roul themselves in grief, cover themselves in grief, and with great tribulation; and if all this will not do to bring them to repentance for their wicked deeds and practices, Christ hath another bed to cast them into, a bed of death and destruction in the next verse, *And I will kill her children with death, except they repent of their deeds*: Repentance is the only remedy against divine judgments; turning from sin, and turning to God, will turn God's wrath from us, and his love towards us. See more hereon about repentance ver. 5. and 16, of this cap.

Vers. 23. And I will kill her children with death; and all the Churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reines and hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

As the true church of Christ hath her children begotten and fostered up by the immortal seed of the word; so false Teachers and Heretiques have their children also, begotten by the spirit of deceit and falsehood, and nourished by errors and wickedness: So this false Nicolaitish Prophetess had her children, followers of her Fornication and Idolatry. In the former verse we read of her Adulteries; that doth commit fornication with her, and promote her doctrines of Idolatries equally with her self, and that Christ would cast them together into great tribulation, except they repent; and here we find their Issue, children of the same cursed stock, which Christ will also shew no mercy to, but kill her children with death, that is, will sweep them away in judgment,

not only with a violent and precipitant death, ut will also slay them with a death eternal. Hence Note,

Observ. 1. *That children that tread in the steps of their wicked parents, are enveloped under the same judgments with themselves.*

If we be partakers of our Father's sins, it is just that we should be partakers of their punishments. If we follow the steps of our faithful parents, we shall have the same reward with them of our faithfulness in the latter day. God giveth to every one according to his works; the child shall not die for the sin of his parent, nor shall the child be saved for the faith or obedience of his parent: *For the soul that sinneth shall die: And he that believeth shall be saved;* But as for the little ones that are incapable of actual sin or faith, their salvation or damnation is according to his will that sheweth mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardens Rom. 9.

Quest. But if it be demanded, How will it stand with the justice of God to cut off little children which are innocent, nor ever yet done good or evil, together in judgment with their parents.

Answ. Little children that had never committed actual sin, even babes new born, or in the womb doubtless perished in the flood, and many in Sodome, and yet without impeachment of, or derogation to divine Justice.

First, God can do it out of Sovereignty and absolute dominion which he hath over his creatures: He is the Potter, he that made the Vessel can break it, he that gave life to babes can take it away, and who can say why dost thou this?

Secondly all Infants are defiled with original sin, and as the wages of sin is death, so God can justly inflict death on them, both temporal and eternal, as the due wages thereof together with their parents.

Thirdly, Little children are part of their parents substance and family, and God may justly punish the living parent in his child by death, as well as any others of his stock and substance, as by a temporal punishment.

Fourthly, Though God may often sweep away in his temporal judgments many little innocent children, as by the Sword, Famine, &c. and yet they not perish eternally; for violent or sudden death is no Argument of God's hatred to them; for many precious souls expire by a more terrible and violent death than that of the Sword, Pestilence, or Famine.

Fifthly and lastly, For the comfort and the better support of the hopes of faithful parents, for the well being of their little innocent dying infants, whether they are taken off by God, either by an ordinary death, or in a common judgment, let them understand for their comfort, that God hath made an everlasting covenant of grace and salvation with Christ for all his Elect ones, Gal. 3. 16. Isa. 53. 11,12. and though the Infants of believers die before they can receive the promise of the Spirit by faith,

yet

yet the chosen ones in Christ are secure by virtue of God's eternal love towards them in Christ, being chosen in him from all eternity, Ephes. 1. 4. and let me with reverence speak it, Christ may as soon perish as one of them, he being the head, they the members, making up one mystical church: Had God ever cloathed himself with flesh in the person of the Son, had it not been to lay down a sufficient price and ransom to divine Justice for all his ever beloved chosen ones? And where there is such a predetermined love as God's is towards his Elect, and such an inestimable and compleat price paid for them as Christ's death is, how can any such possibly perish without violation and impeachment both of divine Love, and divine Justice? This is a surer ground of the salvation of some dying Infants of believing parents, than that that some Arminianising persons of these days do make, to wit, the parents faith, the condition of the Infant's salvation: Dying Infants with those of that persuasion, I leave these few following considerations.

First, They should do well in the first place to produce that grant which they pretend to be in the Gospel covenant, that the parents faith is the condition of their Infants salvation dying so; but this will be done ad Grecas Calendas: it savors too much of works of Supererrogation and Popery to be true.

Secondly, If some dying Infants of believing parents are saved on the condition of their parents faith, then all are so saved that dyes so, before they have forfeited their condition by their own actual transgressions; and if all of them are saved dying so, then happier would faithful parents be to see all their children dy whilst Infants and innocent, for then they should be sure of their salvation, then to see them live, for some of them must become reprobate and wicked; for few godly parents have ever had all godly children, Abraham had Ishmael as well as Isaac, Isaac had an Esau as well as a Jacob, Jacob had a Reuben, Simeon, and Levi. brethren in iniquity, as well as Benjamins, sons of love and comfort.

Thirdly, If all Infants of believers, dying Infants are saved on the condition of their parents faith, how comes some afterwards to forfeit their condition? Are the conditions of the covenant of grace unstable, and left in the hand of man that is vain and frail, that would soon forfeit them all if a thousand salvations were on them? I always thought the death of Christ to be the only proper and meritorious condition of the covenant of grace, and of our salvation, and faith to be our principal evidencing condition and qualification, as the way unto life, Heb. 11. 1. and at most I take it but as the first precedent condition to other graces, for God gives one grace as a reward of the well improvement of the first grace, he that increaseth his Talent, God multiplies his Talents to him; God gives first faith unto his people, before he give

gives them the other graces of his spirit, to wit, of adoption, justification, or sanctification. Faith in order of nature is the precedaneous grace unto all others thought they are conjunct and inseparable to that faith which is sound and sincere, *We receive, faith the Apostle, Gal. 3. 14. the promise of the Spirit through faith.* Faith is made the thorow-tare, conduit and pipe, whereby God conveys all his spiritual blessings and promises into our souls; it is Man's receptive instrument, and the Spirit's revealing instrument; the spirit takes the things of God, and reveals them to the faithful soul by the instrumentality of faith, and the soul receives and apprehends them by the same instrument of faith, and therefore a blessed instrument both of God and Man.

4. Are all believers Infants in the covenant of grace and saveable whilst Infants, and afterwards fall away when come to years of discretion? Hath not Christ said that the love of God is unchangeable? *10. 13. 1.* and is it not impossible that any one of his chosen ones should be lost? *Mat. 24.* or is his covenant broken? *Ier. 31. 32.* or is Christ's death and intercession unavailable? *10. 17. 15. 20. 21.* or is God's wisdom deceived, or his power and goodness made frustrate or overcome by the intervention of man's sin? All which are not only absurd but impossible.

Fifthly, If the parents' faith is the condition of salvation unto their dying Infants, then Infants are saved one way and grown persons in another way; Infants by the faith of another, to wit, their parents; and grown persons by their own faith: & how absurd this is, let the judicious consider. God saves none for faith, but saves some by faith. Faith is not the proper or meritorious condition of the covenant of grace, that alone is the object of faith, Christ crucified: Faith is not the condition, but in an improper sense, as repentance and obedience and all other graces are; but I should rather let the word condition lie by us unhallowed for this end, in regard many have stumbled at it, by making it an Idol rampant; but I should rather call faith the fruits, effects, or some special branch or blessing promised in the covenant of grace, for it is so mentioned in the new covenant, *I will write my Laws in their inward parts, Heb. 8. 10.* and what is the great commandment or law of God that will be written in the heart? That ye believe in Jesus Christ, and faith is the gift of God: If any take faith to be the condition of the covenant or of salvation only, as a qualification, a medium, or way without which grown intelligent persons cannot be justified or saved, with such I should not contend, or should make it a precedaneous condition unto other subsequent graces, I should not much quarrel with that neither; for I think it to be the first foundation grace that the spirit works in the elect Saints of God which produceth, cherisheth, and sanctifieth all other subsequent graces in the soul but

but to make faith, which is our own act, though wrought by God's spirit, the condition of our salvation in a proper sense, to wit, by performing whereof we may legally and justly claim it as our due as wages and debt, the thing promised, to wit, life and salvation on the performance thereof in a legal way: This is to set up somewhat of ourselves, that we may have that whereof to boast of, and glory in our own strength. And in the next place it derogates from all sufficient merits of Christ and his precious death, which is the alone legal condition performed for us, and in our behalves, and whereby we do legally and in the way of justice, claim at the hands of Gods justification and remission of sins, adoption and sanctification, life, salvation, and glorification, and all the good things of the Gospel: But all these things are bid unto us, until the spirit comes to reveal them to us by faith, *Heb. 11. 1.*

Sixtly and lastly, If faith therefore will not serve turn, but is too short and weak a condition properly and legally understood, for the believing parents own salvation, then surely it will not reach the salvation of their Infants; therefore vain to trust or bind upon it for such a work; for it is alone the garment of our elder brother, the white robes of Christ's righteousness, that is fit to reach and cover not only the faithful parents, but their children also if so be God hath chosen them in Christ by his eternal love of election, but for such Infants as God hath in his eternal preterition passed by; as the Potter hath power over his clay to make thereof either vessels of honor or dishonor; who shall say unto God why hast thou made me thus? I say therefore to assert the parents' faith the condition of their Infants salvation, is a groundless ridiculous assertion, not comporting with the least favor of truth; and therefore to be excluded out of the Creed of all sound and orthodox christians. See more on ver. 5. of this cap.

And all the Churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts, &c.] By my righteous judgments on those children of Idolatry and Fornication, all the churches round about shall take notice that I am he (faith Christ) that tries the secrets of mens hearts, and so as a God omniscient, and an all-seeing Judge, can execute righteous judgments on every one according to his works. Hence Note,

Obser. 1. *That God knoweth our hearts most perfectly, and therefore can judge of us most perfectly.*

Man knoweth his own heart but in part, but God more perfectly than himself, *1 Cor. 4. 4.* He that created the heart must know it, and he that himself is infinite must comprehend that fully which is finite. The Devil knows not our hearts and thoughts till we do some ways manifest them by words, gestures, signes, or actions; but God knoweth our thoughts without those means, *Ps. 39. 1. 2.* The Devil may guess at mens thoughts by their natural

ral complexions; but God perfectly knows what is in man without any such helps, *Jo. 2. 25.* The Devil knows but some of our thoughts at some times; but God knows all our thoughts and secretest imaginations of our hearts, and that continually: And this is the reason, because he is the alone Judge of the world, therefore he must know all secrets, else how can he righteously reward every one according to his works? *Eccles. 12. 14. Rom. 2. 6.*

Observ. 2. God in his distributive justice deals with all persons according to the equity of their works.

He who is Justice in the abstract, will give unto every one what is his: God will give good things unto good men, and evil things unto evil men: And that the certain rule and measure of this discriminating judgment will be in the last day according to our works.

Object. But will it not hence follow, That we may merit by our works?

Ans. It is not here said that God will reward us for our works but according to our works; and so in Rom. 2. 6. Works do not merit at the hand of God, Rom. 4. 2. then we should have whereof to glory, but not before God,

1. Because the best are imperfect in respect of the most perfect Law of God, requiring perfection in every particular and circumstance thereof.

2. Our works being in themselves imperfect and finite, cannot merit before an infinite perfection as God is.

3. Works cannot merit because they are not our own primarily, but of God's efficiency.

4. Because men do them as their obliged duties unto God their Creator, but God is debtor unto none.

5. There is no proportion between works and the reward, the one being finite, the other infinite, both in time and measure; yet howsoever, though good works cannot be an even rule of merit with God, as they are with men; yet they are a manifest rule or measure of equitie: For it is very equitable that it go well or ill with us, as we have done either good or evil; and so every one shall be rewarded according to his works.

Object. But evil-works merit eternal death as their proper hire, and why not good works merit Heaven as his due reward and wages?

Ans. True, *The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life:* The one is of our selves most perfect, and therefore deserves its wages and reward; but the other is a free gift of the grace of God, in respect our best and most perfect works are imperfect in his sight.

Vers.

Vers. 24. *But unto you I say and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak, I will put upon you no other burden:*

Vers. 25. *But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come:*

Though God is a God of Justice and Judgments against Fezabel, her Adulteries, and their children, their false doctrines and practices; yet as unto those of Thyatira that had not embraced those wicked ways, God is a God of grace and mercy unto them: for he tells them, *But unto you I say,* that is, even to the rest of them that are at Thyatira, so many of you as have not embraced this devilish doctrine, and have not approved those depths of Satan, as they speak, that is, those mysteries, those high and profound speculations, which are no better then Satan's own devices and stratagems. Hence Note,

*Observ. 1. That Satan will have his *régné* his mysteries, his profound speculations, in his false worship; as well as God shall have in his true worship.*

The Devil will be God's Ape, and as God has his wisdom, his depths, his heights, and mysterious do&ctrines; so the Devil will have his profound speculations for his Disciples also; if God will have true Prophets and Prophetesses, the Devil will have his Balaamites, Nicolaitans, and Fezabels; and those shall have their mysterious do&ctrines, as the Gnosticks of old, who did walk in the way of high speculations and notions hardly intelligible to any sober christian, somewhat like the Necromantick conjurations of the old Romish Priests, or the subelevated alegorizing Fanilists and Quakers of these days, who when they think they speak with most understanding, when they are least understood either by themselves or others: *I will put upon you no other burden, but that which ye have already;* *Burden,* in the Prophetical writings of the Old Testament is taken for the doctrine of God's Judgments against his enemies, *Isa. 13. 1. 15. 1. 17. 1. 19. 1.* and in the Gospel it is taken for the doctrine of any person, as in *Mat. 23. 4.* it is said, That the Pharisees laid burthens on other mens shoulders that they themselves would not touch with one finger, that is, their strict and severe do&ctrines and mandates, to which they would have others bound unto, but would keep themselves at large; in *Mat. 11. 30.* Christ's doctrine is called his yoke, and his burden; his yoke is easie and his burden light: And this is that burden that Christ will lay on the Thyatirans, and no more but this, to wit, Christ's true and Apostolique doctrine which they had formerly received from John, and other of Christ's Embassadors. Hence Note,

E c

Observ.

Observe. *The Churches of Christ are to receive no other burdens or doctrines then what they have already received from Christ.*

Christ himself will add no further burden then his first doctrine of truth delivered by himself and his Apostles: But by what authority do over-presumptuous men, under pretence of Catholique and Apostolique Traditions, add unto the christian Religion which is pure and simple, many of their own vain superstitious ceremonies and inventions, against which Christ hath declared both here, and in *Mar.* 7, and *Luk.* 11, and other places: Surely one day it may be asked of them, Who required these things at your hands? To walk by God's manifest and plain commands, is a sure path, and leadeth unto eternal life; but to make superstructures of our own, or kindle sparks of our own fire, and warm our selves therat, at least notwithstanding those, we may ly down in sorrow. What burdens did the late Prelatical party lay on the consciences of the godly, which they never had received from Christ or his Apostles? and therefore they were truly burdens unto them, and very grievous to bear; but Christ's burden is easie, and his yoke is sweet, *Mat.* 11. 30. Every thing of Christ is pleasant unto the enlightened soul; though his yoke be heavy unto flesh and blood, yet it is nothing irksome, but rather sweet as honey to the regenerate and spiritual christian.

Observe. 2. *That true Christian Doctrine is a burden or yoke.*

He that takes up a burden must go through with it, and tugg under it, and pass through all difficulties or else he may loose his reward: It is not a burden or yoke taken up by our selves, for of our selves we would not willingly come under it, it is tedious to flesh and blood; and therefore Christ is said to put it on us, he makes us first willing by his spirit of grace, and then we are ready to yeild our necks unto this gracious yoke, and our backs unto this burden, therefore it will cost much sweat to go through with it: Christians under Christ's yoke and burden, must not think to live at ease or at liberty, and stray whither their fancies call them; they are under a burden, a yoke, they must attend and keep their work, if they be fruitful proficients in the works of Christ; though it is a sweet burden and an easie yoke, yet it is still a yoke and a burden that is to be attended to. Some write that Christ being reputed *Joseph* the Carpenter's Son, before he fell to the more publique work of his Ministry, he followed his Father in Lawes Trade of making yokes for Oxen, to which that expression of his in *Mat.* 11. did allude; but whether that be true or not, I am sure he made spiritual yokes to lay on the necks of his Disciples; he lays commands on them both naturally moral, and positively moral, to which they were obliged unto, and not only they, but all us, and all that shall believe unto the end of the world; and therefore we are all commanded to hold fast this burden, this yoke of Christ, his faithful Doctrine and Religion,

on,

Ver. 26. 27. *The Revelation revealed.* 211

on, until he come, *hold fast till I come*: This must signify Christ's second and general, and not of his first, or of his special coming in spirit; for this was spoken by Christ nere a hundred years after his incarnation, and he was come in spirit some score years before this was spoken; and such as will have it to be meant of Christ's coming in spirit, this will handsomly follow as a consequence of such an interpretation, that when Christ comes in spirit they must then let go the truth of Christ and his Doctrine; for, *hold fast till I come*, and no longer; but at his second and last appearance, he hath another glorious administration to discover to us which yet we are ignorant of; but after he was come in spirit, he commanded to hold fast the former burden and doctrine delivered unto the Saints; and therefore sure it must be intended of his second coming to Judge the world. Hence Note,

Observe. *That we are to hold fast the Doctrine of Christ, already received from Christ and his Apostles, and delivered to the Saints until his second coming to put an end to all.*

Hold fast till I come] Christ's burden or doctrine was not laid upon the Saints for that first age or generation only wherein it was publique, as some vainly dream, but it was to continue unto all generations, until to him that did hold fast and overcome, power was given him over the Nations, to rule them with a rod of Iron; now it is evident this power was not yet given by Christ unto his Saints; for they are still as Lilies among Thorns, in an afflicted and wilderness estate, and under the power of the Beast and false Prophet, until Christ shall come to give them their release and freedome from all sorrows and Anti-christian servitudes; and therefore Christ's doctrine is to continue unto the end, consult *Ephes.* 4. 11, 12, 13. 2 *Pet.* 1. 19.

Vers. 26. *And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the Nations.*

Vers. 27. *(And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a Potter shall they be broken to shivers) even as I have received of my Father.*

Here is a *vincenti dabitur*, a crown and a reward set forth to him that overcometh and escapeth those assaults and doctrines of Satan, taught by that false Prophetes and Nicolaitish *Jezebel*, and withal keeps close unto godly ways and practises, which are called my works; Christ's works because of his efficiency therein, and approbation thereunto; and that that wil give an interest unto this crown; it is not following of Christ's works a little season (as the feed that fell on the way side, and sprung up, but shortly dyed for want of radical moisture) but a constant persevering, keeping unto Christ's works and doctrines unto the end, that will do the work.

E c 2

Observe.

Observ. 1. Note hence, *That it is not enough for us in our way unto the Kingdom, to escape the pollutions of wicked persons and false Teachers; but we must cleave with Christ's true Doctrine, and do good works also.*

Our Religion and Righteousness must not be a negative Religion or Righteousness, but it must be a positive one also: It is not enough for us to renounce Popery, and all false ways and doctrines, but we must also set up that Religion, Doctrine, and way of worship which is pure, holy, and according to the will of God in all things, as the Lord shall be pleased in grace to reveal unto us. It would be but small commendation to those of *Thyatira* to overcome and escape the doctrines of *Jezebel*, if on the other hand they should fall into the doctrines of *Balaam* or worse: What praise-worthy will it be for us to overcome the assaults of *Rome* and their depths of Satan, and yet set up as pernicious doctrines of our own? What gain will it be to cast off Popery, and embrace Familisme, Anti-scripturisme, Arminianisme, Sarcinianisme, and what not, in the room thereof? In all our repentances we are willed not only to turn from the evil way, but to turn into the good; else it will be but a halt and maimed work, and a lame repentance, and not worthy of the title of any of Christ's works: And this must be done and observed unto the end. Our christian life is a race, and he that leaves off in the mid way hath no hopes to attain the prize. Hence Note,

Observ. 2. *The Crown is given to the persevering Christian. See more on ver. 7. of this cap.*

To him will I give power over the Nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron &c.] These words have relation to that of *Psal. 2. 8. 9.* only the difficulty lies in this, them words of the *Psalme* are a Prophecy and a Promise relating unto Christ, *Aske of me and I will give thee the Heathen for thine Inheritance, and the utmost part of the earth for thy Possession, ver. 9.* Thou shalt break them with a rod of Iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a Potter's vessel; and this is spoken and Prophesied of Christ, and again, in *Rev. 19. 15.* Christ is there said to smite the Nations with the sharp sword of his mouth, and to rule them with a rod of Iron.

Object. But that power and that work is there attributed to Christ alone, How is it therefore here attributed to the conquering Saints?

Answer. By virtue of that union between Christ and his members, they shall do it also: If Christ the head shall rule the Nations, so his members shall rule together with him and under him, he as the head, they as his subordinate limbs and assistants: Christ and they make up but one body mystical, and therefore they both must reign together, unless you conceive a separation between them, which is impossible, *Dan. 7. 13, 14.* The Kingdom is said

Said to be given to Christ, which in *vers. 22. and 27.* is said to be given unto the Saints; they are so reciprocal and so united; that what is done by the one, is said to be done by the other; they are so far from being termed *contraria*, that they are hardly *diversa*, though I shall grant the Saints subordinate unto Christ, yet what is predicated of the one, is often predicated of the other in Scriptures; and therefore it is no hard saying to assert that believers under Christ their head, and as his members, and by his donation and assistance, shall do his own peculiar work as subordinate instruments unto himself, for, *Qui facit per alium facit per se;* and so may the Saints have power over the Nations, and rule them with a rod of Iron, till they be broken as a Potter's vessel; and this interpretation stands with best reason; for though our late Bibles have included all the *27. v.* in a Parenthesis saving the 1st clause thereof, as if it were on purpose to cut it off from having any applicatory reference to the conquering Saints in the *25.* and *26. v.* and to be reserved solely applicable unto Christ; but surely such Interpreters could not have a righteous intention in such a service; for in the best Greek copies as *Stephanus* and others, there is not a title or stroak of a Parenthesis, but the continued speech, in the *25.* and *26. verses* it is to the overcoming christian, and so continued as a farther addition in the *27. verse*; until the latter clause thereof come in, *even as I have received of my Father,* which makes it plain: For what had Christ received of his Father? *Power over the Nations, to rule over them with a rod of Iron, and to break them in pieces as a Potter's vessel,* *Psal. 2. 9. Rev. 19. 15.* as if he had said, even as I have received this power and dominion of my Father over the Nations, so will I give it to him that shall overcome and get the victory over all false ways and practises, and he shall be co-partner with me in this my Throne and Kingdom, *cap. 3. 21.* The intention of the Spirit being cleared in these words to be the conquering Saints to whom power is given over the Nations to rule them with a rod of Iron and to break them in pieces as a Potter's vessel. Next I shall enquire what the power is that is given them.

First, It is such a power whereby they shall judge the Nations, so our new Annotations have it.

Secondly, It is such a power that they thereby shall get victory, and subdue all theirs and the truth's Enemies; so Bishop Hall on the place.

Thirdly, It is such a power whereby they shall break all the obstinate Enemies of Christ to peices as a Potter's vessel. The first is confirmed from *1 Cor. 6. 2. Mat. 19. 28. Jude, 14. 15.* The second and third are confirmed from this *vers.* and *Psal. 2.* compared to *Rev. 19. 18, 19. &c.* where Christ and his Armies powers out the full Vials of divine wrath upon all their obstinate enemies to the utmost. Again, This power over the Nations,

Nations, and ruling by a rod of Iron, and breaking them in pieces as a Potter's vessel, must needs be understood of a corporal breaking, ruling and overpowering, and not a spiritual: So that spiritual is a strange worke to a rod or Scepter of Iron, Christ's golden Scepter of his word is the only instrument to make the Nations bow to his spiritual Kingdom; but for the refusers thereof, he hath another Scepter, in another day to be exercised on them, a rod of Iron and force, whereby he will destroy the mighty ones of the earth, that are his enemies, and will dash them in pieces like a Potters vessel, to the making the Kings and Judges of the earth wise, and to kill the Son lest he be angry, *Psal. 2.10, 11.* Hence Note,

Observ. That Christ's faithful Saints have a day to come, to judge, rule, and reign over the Nations, as well as now to suffer under them.

Though this be the day of their sufferance and patience, yet there is a kingdom joyned to it, *cap. 1.9.* Though John was a brother and companion to the seven churches in tribulation and patience, yet he was too in the hopes of the kingdom to be revealed: This kingdom was never yet fulfilled to the Saints of God, but still rather the contrary hitherto: the Nations of the world break the Saints and churches of Christ by their iron Scepters of force and power: Both Mahometans and Popish Antichristian Rulers and Princes, not sparing Christ's little flock, but breaking them in pieces as a Potters Vessels, and therefore it is most equitable that they shall have a day too, as a reward of their faithfulness and sufferance, wherein they shall lead captivity captive, and give their enemies the same measure that they formerly meted forth unto the Saints, for they are worthy. 2. This kingdom as yet hitherto was not given to the Saints, nor yet will be; for this power over the Nations, and this rod of iron is put into their hands, as the result of their perseverance in the truth at the second coming of Christ, as in the last precedent verse is declared: *Hold fast till I come;* and in that day when Christ comes to him that overcometh, he will give power over the Nations, &c. Now this was promised long after Christ's first coming in the flesh, and also after his special coming in the spirit; and therefore yet there will be a day when he will come again to fulfil this promise, before the ultimate end of all; and for any to expect this rule over the Nations by the rod of iron, before Christ comes and appears in the clouds to the performance of this great work: they may reign, but without Christ; they may get power over the Nations, but not in Christ's way, or his giving. Hence another Note arises.

Observ. 2. That it is Christ alone that gives power into the hands of his Saints over the Nations.

They are not to catch at it themselves: This time is Christ's spiritual and his intercessory kingdom; and if we fight with, or

use

use any other weapons therein then are spiritual, we may lose the benefit of his second kingdom, which is reserved as a reward of our obedience under the first kingdom: He that walks spiritually and soberly under the first of grace and spirit, doubtless the second also will be his portion; otherwise he is in danger to lose both his comforts here, and his portion hereafter in the other kingdom also.

Verse 28. *And I will give him the morning Star.*

This is an additional degree of happiness to the overcoming Saints in that day, when they shall judge and rule the Nations with a rod of iron: In ver. 17. it is called *Hidden Manna*, and a *white stone*, wherein a new Name is written; and formerly, a *Crown of life*, and the *Tree of life in the Paradise of God*, &c. all being variety of expressions, to set forth the great and excellent glories of the other world. Christ did formerly promise the participation of himself in that his glorious kingdom to the conquering Saints, under the Types of *Hidden Manna*, *Tree of Life*, and in this verse, as the *morning Star*. Christ is the bright morning Star: First, Because he then brings comfort with him to his afflicted churches. Secondly, He brings light with him to his ancient people the Jews, that now sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, *Rom. 11. 25. 2 Pet. 1. 19.* This morning Star is the same with that Sun that rises in *Malachi 4. 2.* with *healing in his wings*, and must of necessity signify Christ's personal appearance again, as the greatest part of the crown and reward of his faithful ones, and for the healing, enlightning, and conversion of his ancient church and people the Jews. Hence Note,

Observ. That Christ will appear again to the comfort of his afflicted Gentile churches, and to the enlightning and conversion of his ancient people the Jews, before the ultimate end of all, and general judgement.

Because, then is a day of total destruction, not an appearance for the conversion of them that are in unbelief. That is the time when the Saints receive their utmost glory; not striving, ruling, and over-powering the Nations. Christ then delivers up all power unto the Father, *1 Cor. 15. 24.* therefore that is no day to give power into their hands over the Nations: In the day of ultimate judgement, *Gog*, and *Magog*, and all the churches enemies, are caught and cast into the Lake of fire and brimstone for evermore, *cap. 19. 20.* Therefore it is no day of ruling over them, for that day then will be past and over. To conclude, the Saints temporal reign begins with the appearance of this Morning Star, and ends with the final destruction of all the wicked; but their heavenly glory shall never end. And for the conclusion of this chapter.

Ver. 29. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*

Let the wise intelligent christian consider and ponder what the Spirit saith to each of these churches, and from the often repetition of the Spirits memento, in these words take this conclusion.

That Christ's Doctrines and Prophecies cannot be too often inculcated upon the hearts and memories of his people.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Verse 1. *And unto the Angel of the Church in Sardis, write these things, saith he, that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven Stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*

Christ proceeds with his charge against the church at Sardis, supercribed unto the Angel, or chief Minister of that church, for the reasons before specified, chap. 2. v. 1. *Write these things saith he that hath the Spirits of God and the seven Stars.* I cannot joyn unto their Interpretation that makes the seven Spirits and the seven Stars to be all one, to wit, Christ's seven Angels of his Churches which he carries in his hand, cap. 1. 26. so it would seem a tautologie, whilst a more convenient sense may be found applicable to it, to wit, *These things saith he who hath the seven Spirits of God*, that is, the Spirit of God in his sevenfold graces and perfections; for the number seven in all Prophetic writings doth intimate perfection, as cap. 1. 5. and 4. 5. and this sevenfold spirit of perfection being Christ's own spirit, and being sent by him and at his disposal; and therefore Christ may be truly verified to have the seven Spirits of God, or the sevenfold operating Spirit of God, as well as the seven Stars in his hand and disposal. Hence Note,

Observe. That the Spirit of grace and a gracious Ministry are the special inseparable gifts of Christ towards his Churches.

They are inseparable companions, where the one doth go, the other is present also: If Christ comes with seven Stars in his right hand, he comes with the seven Spirits in his left hand to that people also. A true Ministry and the Spirit are never separated: Though I should not try up God to those means only, yet ordinarily it is in vain to expect Christ in the Administration of the Spirit, without the Ministerial Administration of his Stars and Angels: They are as it were the Charioteers of the Spirit. The Word is the Spirit's *Vehiculum* or Chariot, but the Ministers thereof are those that carry and support this Chariot on the shoulders; never think that the Spirit, the glory of this Chariot, will come or rest in our Temples, unless it be brought unto us by the feet of those Stars, those beautiful ones that bring the glad tidings of peace, God hath so linked together in his all-wise decrees and predeterminations the concatenation of subordinate causes or mediums unto salvation, that ordinarily one cannot be effected

without the other; and so we are saved by faith in Christ through the sanctification of the spirit and word: One will not doe this work without the concurrence of the other; but when Christ comes with them joynly together, either to a particular Soul, or Church, he makes them, of a wilderness and a land of darkness, a *Goshen*, and a land of light: And happy is that people to whom Christ so cometh with his seven Spirits and his seven Stars, with his gracious Spirit, and spiritual Ministry; and for such whose lot is fallen in such a Land, I say, their lot is fallen in a goodly Heritage.

But what is the reason that Christ here appears under this representation of one that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven Stars?

I Answer, Christ is upon discovery of the hypocritical defections of the church of *Sardis*, and thererfore he needs to appear not only under a searching, piercing and spiritual administration, as one that can search the reines and hearts, *cap. 2. 23.* and as one that hath the seven spirits of God, or the sevenfold searching Spirit of God which knoweth the hidden things of man; but also under a lightsom administration of the seven Stars, for a further discovery and conviction of their hypocritical practises; and therefore the church of *Sardis*'s hidden hypocrisies and inward rottenness, being searched out by the Spirit of God, and made manifest by the true light and Ministry of the seven Stars, Angels or Ministers of the word, he falls upon them with his charge against them, and tells them, *I know thy works that thou hast a Name that thou livest and art dead.* Hence by the way Note,

Observe. That Christ's spiritual Ministry in the hands of his Ministers and Embassadors, can try the secret and hidden things of man.

The spiritual man saith the Apostle, judgeth all things, and is judged of none: And if a private spiritual member may judge, *Judicio discretionis*, then surely much more the publique Embassadors and authorised Ministers of Christ; they can try by the Word and Spirit whither our works & profession be only in name and outward, or whither inward and sincere; they are the Masters of the Assemblies, and the experienced Elders of the church, and therefore are and ought to precede and excel all others in every spiritual work and service whatsoever.

Observe. Another Note hence is, That the Spirits's Method is first to convince of sin, before it manifests its remedy against sin.

The whole, saith Christ, need not the Physician, but the sensible sick and wounded: Christ first convinces *Sardis* that she had only a Name, that she lived but was dead, before he lays down her remedy in the third ver. in bringing her to repentance; so he dealest with *Pergamus*, *Thyatira*, and other delinquent churches also. It is an Anti-scriptural Method of some that preach up faith and repentance unto a sinful and backslidden people before they

they have first fully convinced them by the Spirit in the Word, that they are under bondage, sin and misery: This is no legal Method, as the Antinomists do conjecture, but of a spiritual and Gospel spirit; for unless we be first sensibly convinced of our loss and misery by sin, how should we looke for a Saviour or salvation by faith in Christ? All the primitive converts that we read of, were first pricked unto their hearts for sin, before they asked, *What shall we do to be saved?* *Act 2.*

But to return to Christ's charge against *Sardis*; *I know thy works, for thou hast a Name that thou livest, but thou art dead*, as if he had said, Thou hast a name, a reputation that thou livest, that is, that thou art a faithful professing church and livest in me by faith, but thou art dead, that is, not altogether dead, for then it was in vain to put her afterwards to strengthen the remainder of grace, but as good as dead, low, weak, and infirm, and that faith and profession which thou pretendest to be in thee, is but as a dead profession, and liveless faith. Hence Note,

Observe. That though Churches may carry a fair outward profession, and a common reputation of faithful ones, yet they may be very hypocritical, and no better then dead, liveless, and rotten at the root.

This church at *Sardis* had a name, that she lived, but she was dead; her graces were even at deaths dore, yet still would keep up the Name of a christian church: Who higher in profession and name then the church of *Rome*? Doth she not take unto her self and go under the name of *Catholique*, as if she had been the only church that holds the general faith delivered unto the Saints? And yet what church more dead and rotten then she? Notwithstanding our nominal faith and common-reputed christianity among us, yet we may be dead to all motions and operations of all true spiritual life in the church of *Smyrna*, *cap. 2. 9.* they were those which said they were Jews, but they were not, and Christ tells them, *I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews & are not, but are of the Synagogue of Satan:* It is a kind of blasphemy and dishonour done unto God, when under the cover of profession we endeavour to excuse our errors and profaness: Open opposition is less dishonorable unto God, then impure and dead lives under the visor of profession, *Mat. 21. 28. 29.* That froward Son in the Parable was less guilty that said, he would not do the will of his Father, then he that said I will, and did it not; *James* resolves the Question in that Interrogation of his, *cap. 2. 14.* *What doth it profit if a man saith he hath faith and hath not works? can faith save him?* meaning a dead nominal faith without fruits and works: So would I put the question here, what will the pretended faith and christianity of our nominal and national christians profit or advantage them? The Devil hath such a faith that is only in the tongue and the lip, and yet fare nough from salvation

or the grace of God; these formal outward graces are so far from bringing in any real comfort or hope of glory in the future to the souls that only have them, that they bring in real disadvantage and loss unto them; for they argue a conviction of the truth, yet a refusal thereof in the love and power thereof. And secondly it hath been always a harder work of the Ministry, to bring pretended and formal professors unto the power of godliness, than open Harlots, Publicans and Sinners; witness the Pharisees of old in Christ's days, and the National, Formal Jews, who would boast of their carnal priviledges, and of having *Abraham* to their Father, and the Oracles and Temple of God among them, somewhat like the late Levitical Prelatical Tribe among us, and yet who more blind and dead then they unto true spiritual knowledge? And who more eager persecutors and enemies to Christ, his ways and Saints, then those Formal National Jews; who say they are Jews and are not, but are of the Sinagogue of Satan?

But to give you a test and taste to try whither your profession and faith be a living profession and faith or not.

First, True and lively faith uniteth us to Christ, and draweth life and vertue from him, *I live by faith in the Son of God*, Gal. 2. 20. You know there is life in a body by the notions and beating of the pulses: A living faith will be active, and discover it self in some gracious effects and operations: If Christ be in you, he will live in you, he will not be dead and idle, but be moving in you to gracious duties and operations; for there is none liveth in Christ but he bringeth forth much fruites, 10. 15. 5. It is true, faith may not always be alike lively and active; but where it is true and real, it will be always living; and though you be not sensible of its activity, yet you will be sensible of deadness and complain under it, which is a signe of a living faith, though not a lively one.

Secondly, Where this true faith is, there will be its constant concomitant that forcible principle love. See cap. 2. 19. Affection followeth persuasion; and where love is, there will be service and worke, for faith worketh by love, for when we apprehend by faith God's love in Christ to us, it begets in us a return of love, and acts of services and thankfulness to God. True faith will not be idle, but will be a working faith, and will produce that labour of love mentioned, *Heb. 6. 10. 1 Thes. 1. 3.*

Thirdly, A living faith must needs be active, being wrought by the quickning spirit of Christ; help engageth to action, and where the spirit of Christ shall worke, who shall resist his power?

Fourthly, Where true faith is there will be high aims to glorifie God: for it will not be so dis-ingenious to take and receive mercies

mercies from God, but it will study how to give and render unto God due praises and glory for it; for we are not redeemed by Christ to live unto our selves, but to glorifie God in our souls, bodies and spirits.

Well then, try your faith and profession whether it be dead or formal, or active or living, by these few particulars; it is not a naked aslent or unactive outward profession will serve turn, this is dead and lifeless, yea twice dead, and to be plucked up by the roots, *Jnd. 12.* dead in your first natural condition, and dead in your hypocritical profession, for by this it appeareth never to be otherwise with you: But a lively faith is a working faith, by and through the influence of Christ and his spirit, being zealous of good works, and all for Christ's sake and his glory. *Paul's* whole life, *Phil. 1. 21.* was as it were consecrated to Christ; for to me to live is Christ says he, that is, my life is Christ's, for his uses, his purposes, and his glory: In short, a true and lively faith works by Christ by the continual supply and influence of his spirit, and for Christ, and with aim at his glory.

Observ. 2. 'Tis very usual for dead Formalists to carry a higher hand in outward profession then the real Christian.

Sardis pretends highly to faith, and to a name that she lived, beyond her sister churches; and the name was only that she aimed at, for in the truth of grace she was no better then dead and rotten. It is not very usual still among dead and carnal christians to boast of their christianity, their baptism, their church, their external ordinances and the like: They needs would satisfie themselves in the name of christians, as the carnal Jews, that said they were Jews and were not *ver. 9.* So unto these carnal Formalists, the name of christians is pleasant to them, yet still are enemies to the true Saints of God and the power of godliness; and the reason of this is, in that they perceive they want the true working faith which is only acceptable unto God, all being naturally self-lovers; they would needs content themselves and God too, if they might with a gilded sophisticate and dead faith and profession, which is to be had at an easier rate then the true one, which should commend them unto God, and denominate them his Saints in the eye of the world; but this faith is too short for such a work, being dead, false, and lifeless, as a carcass without a soul, but that is the faith that justifieth and Christ accepteth that worketh by love, *1 Thes. 1. 3.*

Vers. 2. *Be thou watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to dy; for I have not found thy works perfect before God.*

Esto vigilans, as Beza reads it, γένεσθαι γένεσθαι; and I should rather take it in the active sense, Be thou awake, or awake thou, then be watchful; for it argues the state of life and activity to be watchful, watch and pray; but to awake, it only shows a dormant dead and sleepy state wherein the church of *Sardis* was; for she bore the name that she lived, but she was as good as dead; therefore Christ tells her γένεσθαι γένεσθαι, rouse up thy self from thy sleepy state, and strengthen the things which remain; re-inforce revive, and stir up those small remaining sparks of graces that are ready even to give up the very last gasp within thee; and though thou thinkest and maist have a conceit of thy self that thou art something, in that thou hast an external profession and name that thou livest, yet I must tell thee (faith Christ) *I have not found thy works perfect before God.* Hence Note,

Observ. A state of sin is a great impairing and consumption unto the life of grace.

Sardis is brought by it even to death's door, her graces that were once eminent, are come thereby to some small remainders, and they too almost extinct and near the grave; and though death it self (I mean spiritual) hath not yet seized her, yet she is somewhat near it; she is under the shadow of death, for she sleeps and is called to awake, and to stir up the remainders of life that is in her, least she takes her last sleep by the spiritual death of grace here, and eternal death hereafter. Sin is to the soul as sickness is to the body.

Observe. It carries with it its distempers and disorders of the soul.

3. Ugliness and deformity, it is compared to the Leprosie under the Law,

3. Grief and pain, as sickness causes grief to the body, so sin causes horror and anguish unto the soul.

4. It causes weakness, for the more sin the more weakness and disability to spiritual duties: We were without strength saith the Apostle, Rom. 5. 6. weak feeble souls in the things of God whilst we were in sin and the state of nature.

5. Every sickness of the body, tends to the death of the body; so every sin tends to the death both of body and soul eternally. The only remedy that we have against this poison and sting of sin, is to hasten to Christ by faith, who is the Physician of our souls, and by whose stripes we are healed.

*Object. But is it not said here to *Sardis* to awake and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die? Was it not in the power*

power of *Sardis* to awake her self, recover her self and renew her graces without going to Christ by faith?

I answer. Negatively Christ is set up for that very end, not only for a propitiation, If any man sin we have an Advocate; but it is also from his influence and from him, as the Fountain of life whereby all our graces are maintained and kept alive, *For the life I live (as the Apostle says) is by the life of the Son of God:* If Christ should withdraw his gracious presence from our souls, we should never awake out of sin, nor do our first works, or renovate our selves by repentance.

Secondly, This duty to awake and renew their graces was set on those of *Sardis* that had already received the first grace and Christ by faith; for it is here said, *strengthen the things which remain;* therefore they had a being though a sorry one; and those that have received grace from Christ are in a capacity to work from the power of that grace: *Having received the promises (faith the Apostle, that is, Christ the great end and object of the promises) cleanse your selves, go on in the work of sanctification in the power of Christ;* for all our gracious acts are to be done in and through his continued power and influence.

Thirdly, When we are commanded to awake, strengthen and renew our selves by repentance &c. they must be always taken to be as inseparable parts of a lively faith; for we cannot awake from sin unless we first look upon Christ in the promises; neither can we possibly renew or restore our faint graces before we first eye God in Christ, *out of whose fulness we receive grace for grace:* Therefore in vain to set home spiritual duties on persons that have not first received light and life from Christ. Christ is the first work that must be offered and received to and by souls before they can act towards God in the least acceptable services.

Object. But then again, some one may say, If the small remainders of grace that were in *Sardis* were almost dead or ready to die, does not this argue a falling away, and a possibility of the faithful to perish totally?

Answe. Grace may be very low and yet not dead, it was as sparks of fire under much ashes, with *Sardis*; and yet we know sparks are as real fire, though not as fervent and virtual as a flaming one. Indeed it was low with *Sardis* in her spiritual condition; and it is most just with God when we are great sinners against him, that he hides much of his gracious presence from us: When by sin we quench the operations of the spirit of God, God may justly quench its effects towards us; but no sooner shall we follow the motions of the spirit, and renew by repentance, but presently God gives a more enlivening and effectual spirit into our souls; and notwithstanding his former withdrawals, yet it is but a Fatherly chastisement, not an utter dereliction and forsaking.

Secondly, *I answer.* Persons that are Elect and have really ta-

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sted of the vertue of Christ's death and intercession, can never utterly fall away, unless they would make the power, wisdom, and preordination of God to be weak and fallible, and the death and intercession of Christ impotent and insufficient unto that end to which it is ordained; yet withal I assert, though Elect persons cannot utterly fall away, as being given by the Father unto Christ, and none such can be cast away, being helped by the mighty power of God unto salvation; yet Election of a state of persons may fail and perish: As to instance in the Jewish Nation, the Election thereto did obtain, *Rom. 11. 7.* to wit, those that did pertain to the Election of God in that Nation, did obtain mercy and reconciliation by Christ; yet at last for the sin of that Nation, the Election of God did fail as respecting that State and Nation, and the Ax was laid unto the root, and that good Olive cut down and cast into the fire, and the wild Olive or Gentile Nations grafted in upon their Stock. Obstinacy in sin and unbelief was their cutting off, and faith is the Gentiles incision and grafting in; as the one is cut off by unbelief, so the other is grafted in by faith, *Rom. 11. 20.* Those few names in *Sardis* that do hold fast the faith, they are in a safe condition, whilst all the rest of that church may perish utterly; the first are marked and written in the eternal book of life, of God, and of the Lamb, and therefore cannot perish; but after God had finished his work at *Sardis*, *Thyatira*, *Rome*, *Corinth*, &c. and called his Elect out of them, and secured their eternal happiness, he can remove the current of his Election to another people without any changeableness or shadow of change in him, and make those very people in their posterities the very seat and Sinagogue of Satan, who were once his beulahs, darling, and beloved ones.

Thirdly, there are gilded formal hypocritical graces and believers; and such may not be only ready to dy, but dead, twice dead, dead at the root, and fit for nothing but to be plucked up and cast into the fire; and therefore it is very ordinary in Scripture, to say that such are fallen away, perished, and lost from their faith which they seemed to have, all their graces are in the outward appearance only. So *Demas*, *Simon Magus*, *Judas*, *Ananias* and *Saphira*, &c. may be said to fall away from the faith, because they had never the truth of real grace in them; all was but seeming formal, hypocritical, and at best but historical, which the devils may have, and for all this perish everlastingily.

Obser. 2. *It is a great mercy for God to leave some remains of grace in a sinful Church and people.*

If God had not left us a remnant, we had been worse then *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*. Small sparks being blown and cherished, may become a flame; so little grace though like a Mustard-seed, may become a great Tree. It God should deprive us of all the seed of grace, there must needs follow a spiritual death unto our souls;

souls; for when the soul of the soul is gone, the soul will be soulless and dead unto every good and spiritual worke: As long as there is life in us, though it is infirm and weak, yet there is some hopes of recovery; but being once dead, there is no hopes of Redemption from the grave: So as long as we have the Spirit of Christ, though it works but faintly and weakly by reason of corruption in us; and if it comes but to the first step and lowest degree of spiritual life, to wit, to be sensible of its dead and carnal condition, and to complain under it, there are good hopes of recovery unto such a soul; and unto such I may boldly say unto its comfort: Awake, and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to dy.

Obser. 3. *Though our graces are but weak, and low, and ready to dy, yet it is our duty to cherish, strengthen, and confirm them until we bring forth the worke of Christ within our selves unto perfection.*

We are not to contemn the day of small things; for he that improves but one Talent well, shall be made ruler of many Talents. The Beasts in the Prophet always went forward, *Ezek. 2. 11.* but grubs that are backward are reckoned among unclean creatures, *Lev. 11. 10.* God hath promised that he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoaking flax: If we cherish the work of grace in us, though in never so small a measure, God will add a greater and fuller supply unto us; God will add unto faith vertue, unto vertue patience, &c. and according to that wodl in *2 Pet. 1. 5.* *Every body*, they shall all come hand in hand in comfort, as following one the other as in a chorus or dance. Doubtless it would not be labor lost for *Sardis* to strengthen and revive the remainders of grace that were ready to expire within her; though Christ would be at hand to assist her by his grace and spirit, yet he would not do it without her motion and improvement, as it was once said by *Austine*, *Though God made us without us, yet he would not save us without us.* Grace works most kindly when it meets with improving hearts that are ready to stay with young *Samuel*, *Thy servant heareth, Lord speak.* Though God hath ascertained and decreed the salvation of his Elect, yet it does not exclude the duty of creatures, and the work of second causes, *Ezek. 36. 37.* *Jer. 29. 11. 12.* *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling;* we are to worke for life as if life, were to be got by working; and doubtless the crown will be the more glorious, where the greater improvements of grace are made; the more grace the Vessel is capable of and filled with here, the more glory it will be capable of and filled with hereafter: Every Vessel shall have his fulness in glory, but every one according to its capacity; as there is a glory in the Stars, Moon, and Sun; and one differing from another in glory, yet every one hath their fulness: So in the Kingdom of glory, when God giveth to every one according to his works, every one shall have the reward of their works, eternal happiness; but

but some shall sit upon twelve Thrones judging the twelve Tribes of Israel: all shall be shining Stars, but some of a greater Magnitude than others. But to proceed,
For I have not found thy works perfect before God. It was not a legal perfection that Christ could not find in *Sardis*, he did never seek for that absolute perfection in them; that would be in vain, seeing they were so full of Imperfections: But yet this intimates, that the faithful christians and their works may be perfect before God; although they are not found perfect in *Sardis*, yet may be found perfect in others, that are more found and godly: For the clearing of which understand, that sometimes in Scripture perfection is taken for sincerity and uprightness, as *Gen. 17. 1.* *Walk before me & be thou perfect, that is, upright & sincere, as I am.* *I.*, he was a man that was perfect and upright, one that feared God and despised evil; he was a plain simple man, honest at the heart, in this sense the works of *Sardis* were not perfect before God, they were not honest, sincere and upright according to his will, they were Hypocritical in name, shew, and appearance, only not in truth and sincerity.

Secondly, Perfection may be taken, 1. As respecting our justification. Or, 2. Our sanctification. The first of these in a strict sense, is a compleat perfection; for the Saints are compleat in Christ their head, as unto justification, and from all sin and the guilt thereof; there is not one sin left which is not washed away by his blood; in this respect they are perfect; *By one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* *Heb. 10. 14.* no sigmoidal at all, but that roundness of the heart.

Then, Secondly, There is a perfection of sanctification and holiness. And that is,

1. In the respect of the beginnings and parts thereof.

2. In respect of the prevailing degree thereof.

3. In respect of the times thereof.

4. In respect of the duration and perseverance of it.

5. In respect of others. *1. A* *beginning* *in this life* *have a perfect beginning of holiness*, as to its parts, because it begins in every part; they are sanctified throughout in soul, body and spirit *1 Thes. 5. 23.* though every part be not throughout sanctified, by reason of the imperfection of mediuma by which they are sanctified, yet they are sanctified in every part throughout, in understandings, wills, affections, desires, memories, thoughts, and hearts.

Secondly, They have every grace in their souls, not only in the truth thereof, but in the prevailing degree thereof; as when faith, love, patience, humility, &c. overcome infidelity, hatred, impatience, pride, and other their opposite vices and evils: So when this work of sanctification is begun in all parts thereof, it may be said a perfect work in beginning, and when it comes

to the prevailing degree thereof, it may be called a perfect work, having prevailed against its contrary.

Thirdly, They are likewise perfect in respect of their aims and desires; God accepts the will for the deed; and heretofore aims and strives for perfection, God accepts as perfect, though mixed with much imperfections: Christ could not find the works of *Sardis* perfect in this sense neither.

Fourthly, They are likewise perfect in respect of their duration: Apostacy from the faith and truth will loose the honor of perfection, and makes their crown to wither; when a righteous (or perfect) man turneth to iniquity, all the righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned, *Ezek. 18. 24.*

Fifthly, In respect of others the Saints are perfect souls: compare them unto the gilded out side formal christians, and they are gold and perfect in respect of them; and so Christ could not find the works of *Sardis* perfect before him, as those of *Ephesus, Smyrna, &c.* Hence Note first,

Obser. 1. The great cause that our works are not perfect, but defective, before God, is for want of honest sincerity in them.

Sardis was blamed for this very thing, and for want of this grace; she carried a fair name that she lived in her pretended graces, but she was dead, there was no sincerity and truth in them. If we suppose a man to worship God in all his Ordinances, and avoid all outward evil; yet if there be double-heartedness in his spirit, all is cast off by God as abominable. Sincerity is that that gives perfection to every grace, it is the very truth and spirit of every grace; as when we believe, we must believe sincerely; when we love, we must love sincerely and cordially; when we sorrow or repent, it must be done sincerely, that is, truly, fully, without any mixture or hypocrisy; for a double minded man God doth hate: Sincere *quasi sine cera*, without wax, without composition; and as the word here beares it in the Greek, *πεπονημένη*, I have not found thy works full, there was somewhat wanting within to make them compleat and perfect; without this ingredient grace of sincerity, all our duties are but as sounding Brats, and a tinckling Cimbal: But add sincerity unto the least and most imperfect of our duties, and they will become in the esteem of God most perfect. God accepts a Lamb from *Abel* offered in sincerity, rather than clouds of Incense and thousands of Sacrifices from a wicked and profain *Cain*: Yea if it be but a widdows mite, or some Goats hair coming from one that is sincere, God looks upon it as a rich present, and calls the presenter thereof perfect. Truth of grace and sincerity is our perfection here; but in the world to come, we shall have perfection in the highest degree, as well as the perfection of sincerity and truth of grace in this life; therefore let us so walk before God as becometh perfect ones.

Observe. 2. It is the Saints duty that they aim and press after perfection in all their graces, works, and duties.

The church of Sardis was worthily blamed for want of this perfection, her works were not full and entire, there was somewhat wanting, and therefore blame-worthy and imperfect.

First; They are to press after the perfection of justification by faith, and evidenced by love and works, and so make their election and justification sure unto their own souls, and manifest it unto others also.

Secondly, To seek after perfection in all graces and parts of Christianity, in souls, bodies, and spirits, to be perfect, intire, wanting nothing, *1 Cor. 1. 4.* as ye abound in every thing in faith, and utterance, and knowledg, and all diligence; see that ye abound in this grace also, to wit, charity. *2 Cor. 8. 7.* There must not one necessary grace be wanting in true Saints; though some one may be more eminent then others, yet the truth of all must be there, as they will have faith, they will have patience, as patience, love, zeal, humility, self-denial, and all other graces whatsoever; *Be ye holy, for I am holy in all manner of conversation* *1 Pet. 1. 15.* *16.* and this must be also in the prevailing degree thereof; for, *bid servants ye are whom ye obey;* if sin be stronger in thee then grace, then ye are sinners and wicked ones; but if grace prevail, then are ye gracious and perfect ones.

Thirdly, Their aims and desires must be after perfection, they will not be contented with a little grace, no less measure will serve their turn then what they enjoy after the resurrection. *I would by any means attain to the resurrection of the dead.* (saith Paul) *Phil. 3. 11.* their aims are no lower then unto the glorious and everlasting state, and therefore do alwaies press on unto perfection, their desires are somewhat infinite, as the glory they expect. Leaving thee things that are behind *Heb. 6. 1.* and herein their aims and desires will appear more perfect, in that they hate sin so perfectly that they cannot be quiet until it be abolished, and they freed from it.

1. From the guilt thereof, by justification in the blood of Christ.

2. From the piercing power thereof, by the sanctification of the spirit of grace.

3. From the very being of it, in their glorification.

4. They are to aim at perfection in duration and perseverance; As they are not to want any grace in the truth thereof, or in the prevailing degree thereof; so are they not to want it in any part of their lives, for the Crown is given to him that overcometh.

5. True Saints press forward to excel and precede other formal and outside Christians in all duties of grace and perfection; he that hath any grace will always desire more; a holy ambition in

in grace and goodness is very commendable. God tells Satan that there was none like Job on the face of the earth, *Job 1. 8.* a perfect and upright man. Many desire to be before others in honour, riches, and power, but few desire to excel in grace: If we be true Saints and aim at perfection, we will not think it enough to be like others in grace; but labour to go beyond others in all good and perfect works: Hence the Quakers may see and be convinced that we hold a perfection in this life, though not an absolute legal one, whereunto nothing can be added, as they; but an Evangelical one, upon better grounds and principles.

Verse 3. Remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent; if therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Call to minde therefore the doctrine of grace which thou hast formerly received and heard, and cleave fast thereunto, and repeat thy straying there from: But if thou wilt not repent, and be awakened out of this thy sleep of sin, I shal come as a thief, suddenly unawares upon thee, and seize on thee with unexpected judgements. Christ takes up this metaphor and comparison of coming as a thief, for divers reasons. 1. Because a thief cometh speedily, in a time when no man looks for. *Mat. 24. 43.* This sets us on a diligent watchfulness. *If the good man of the house did know in what watch the thief would come, he would watch, and not suffer his house to be broken through, in his goods stolen.* 2. As a thief comes in the dark or dead of night, so Christ comes when there is the greatest darkness, and deepest night of error on the whole world; and therefore Christ says in *Luke.* when he comes, shall he find faith on earth? True faith will be such a rarity at Christ's coming, that it will be found in very few, his elect only. This quickens our faith, and puts us upon the tryal of it. 3. A thief comes prepared and resolued to over-mastere all oppositions: so Christ's coming in judgement is with power, and to tread down, and make all his enemies his footstool. This supports and comforts the distressed afflicted Saints: He formerly came as a Lamb to suffer, and he after came as a conboster, to support all those for whom he suffered and died: and he hath an other coming, his ordinary particular temporal judgements against his enemies, which he frequently and very often sends forth against them for their transgressions, and so he threatens to come here against Sardis, and his offending churches. And lastly, he comes in his last and ultimate judgement with great power and glory, to overthrow and destroy all his antichristian foes and enemies whatsoever, in *Rev. 16. 15.* it is said, *Lo, I come as a thief;* and presently follows the great battel of Armageddon, and the utter destruction of Babylon, by the seventh Vial of God's plagues and judgements.

First,

First, from the former part of this verse, observe,

Observe. That a calling to mind of God's former gracious dealings with us, is not only a great preservative against sin but an effectual means for the recovery out of sin, by a holy repentance.

Look back unto the Rock from whence thou art hewen, and review thy former unregenerate state, and how you were therein aliens, strangers, and enemies unto God by evil works, and how it is far better with you now in your state of faith, then it was then in sin and wrath: for when ye have sin presented unto you in its enticements and provocations, it will make gracious souls to reason thus with themselves, Was I not once an enemy unto God in my sinful unregenerate state, and shall I again fall back into it, as the Sowe into the myre? God forbid! How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? Will not then my latter estate be far worse then the first? Because God hath been gracious unto my poor soul, and delivered it as a Bird out of the snare, or snatch'd it as a brand out of the fire, shall I again cast my self into the bonds of Satan, and into the flames of hell, by my turning this grace of God into sin and wantonness? The Lord forbid! Again, for the recovery of backslidden souls, that are almost spiritually dead, and have almost nothing but the name and common reputation of living ones; It is most useful and advantagious to such poor souls, for their recovery, to recognize and look back on those good things they formerly received of God, and heard concerning him. For first, They heard that God was a gracious reconciled God, and a merciful Father in Jesus Christ, ready to receive those of his chosen ones, even in their blood and sin, that did come to him by faith in Christ to be healed of their transgressions; and this they not only heard by the hearing of the ear, but received it also into their hearts by faith: And if God was so ready then to receive us into reconciliation with himself, whiles enemies unto him, how much more will he be now ready and willing, being reconciled by his blood, to receive us again into his gracious favour after our backslidings, upon our repentance, and turning unto him from our sins then formerly, being now adopted children, and no longer strangers and enemies. The contemplation of this grace, made the prodigal childe in the Gospel, to return unto his father, and he was not mistaken of his father's good will towards him; for, as soon as his father saw him but afar off, he had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, *Luke 15. 20.* Oh the wonderful grace of God! That no sooner have we hearts or desires to return unto God, and to have an eye towards him, after we have played the prodigals, and gone astray from him by evil works, but presently he meets us more then half way, being yet a far off, and falls upon our necks, and kisses us with kisses of his love and favour. Though we play the prodigals, yet we are children still; the prodigal was a son, though he plaid

plaid the bankrupt, and spent almost all his stock of grace. The consideration that we are children, though wanton ones, will make us desire to return unto our father, though provoked against us by our sinful courses; and for our comfort and encouragement he re-in, consider that of *Johns.* If any man sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous, *1 John 2. 1.* It is our advocate, the children's advocate, believers advocate, and therefore we may come and return unto the father with the greatest boldness.

Observe. 2. Another Note from hence is, That we are to stick close to, and hold fast that doctrine which was first delivered unto the Saints.

The church of *Sardis* that was almost lost and dead in her spiritual state and condition, is not commanded by Christ to seek out any new ways or novel doctrines, but to call to mind and remember the old ones which they had formerly received and heard from the faithful Apostles and Ministers of Christ: They were not to seek after any new discovery of light which was not formerly delivered to them; there was great danger in such ways: They might attain unto the new lights of the Gnosticks, Nicolaitans, and the high speculations thereof, or rather, the depths of Satan as they speak, and yet perish eternally: For the way to life is the good old way discovered first unto *Adam* after his fall, in the promised seed of the woman, to break the Serpent's head, *Gen. 3.* and more and more manifested under the promises and the darker types and shadrows of the Law, *sin* at last it came to its meridian and full discovery by the Son of God himself, in the *Gospel.* And this Doctrine of this Gospel of Christ, was it that *Sardis* was commanded to remember that which she had formerly received and heard, and to keep close unto it, from which he had made a defection great and foul? This is the sum of wholesome Doctrine that we are commanded to keep close unto, and this was that that *Paul* enjoyned *Timothy* to attend unto *1 Tim. 3. 14, 15.* Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and art perswaded thereof, knowing of whom thou hast learned them: and that thou hast known the holy Scriptures of a child, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through the faith which is in Christ Jesus; The only way that is to restore and renew the soul that is almost dead in sin, to attain the new Name, the new Life, the new Jerusalem that cometh down from God, is to keep close to and hold fast the old way, the old Doctrine, the old light delivered by Christ and his Apostles: For all innovations in Doctrines or Worship, carry great danger with them.

And I will come on the day of judgment, &c.
Observe. 3. That Christ will fall upon the wicked with his judgments when they least think of, in an hour that they shall not know of: His judgments will prevent their expectations. None

None would believe in Jeremiah's time, that the captivity would come upon Jerusalem; but every one would put far away the evil day, *Lam. 4. 12.* as if it were to come in after generations and not in theirs. See *Exodus 12. 22, 37.* The Jews little thought in Christ's days that the period of their City and Temple was so nigh, though he foretold them that shortly it should come to pass, that not one stone should be left upon another. The old World was secure until Noah entered into the Arke, and the flood came and destroyed them all. *Sodome and Gomorrah* would not believe God's threatenings until they felt the consuming fire and brimstone *Gen. 19.* Whilst *Belshazzar* was carousing in his cups, God writes a *M E B N E, T E K S B I U P H A R S T I N* over his head and Kingdome, *Dan. 5. 4.* &c. *England* and other Nations did not think that bloody Judgments were so near: Whatsoever sinners think, Christ is at hand, the Judge and Judgment is at the door. Sinners are secure and think judgments slumber, when they are upon the march and upon the wing, *Isa. 5. 26. Lam 4. 19.* Wicked men say as those in *Isa. 5. 19.* *Let him make fast and hasten his work that we may see it;* and let the counsel of the holy one of Israel draw nigh and come that we may know it: They mocked the Prophets of God that told them of judgments and destruction; but God will avenge them speedily, *I come quickly* (saith Christ) *Rev. 22. 20.* and the reasons that God brings on judgments with speed, and sooner then they are looked for, are,

First, From the sins of the wicked, who highly wrong and provoke God's justice and patience, and call for his wrath upon them by their sins. *Secondly,* Because of the Prayers of the godly, who daily importune God to avenge them of their enemies, *Luk. 18. 7, 8.* And shall not God avenge his own Elect, which cry night and day unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. It was the cry of those precious souls clothed in white, *Rev. 6. 10.* that brought destroying Judgments and desolation on *Babylon.* *How long O Lord holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?* It was answered them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. See more hereon *Cap. 7. 16.*

Observe. 4. *The exception of all terrible judgments is committed to the hand of Christ.*

He comes as a thief to destroy, spoil, and undo his enemies; he will not only rob them of a little, but take all their pretended graces and comforts from them: Only here lies the difference (for comparisons and parables do not always run on all four) The wicked and unjust theives spoil and plunder the honest, thriving, peaceable men; but Christ as the just thief, spoileth and maketh desolate

desolate the wicked and unrighteous only. Christ comes as a Thief in the time of his coming, in the maner of his coming, in the disposition of his coming, it is to destroy and spoil. When Christ said unto the man that had not the Wedding Garment, *Friend how camest thou in hither without thy Wedding Garment?* *Take him, bind him hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness.* This was an act of a dreadful Judge, in cap. 1. ver. 14, 15. Christ eyes and feet were like unto flames of fire; he had fiery judgments in his hands against his churches, which destroyed and dissolved them for their sins and transgressions. It was Christ that sent the miserable desolating judgments on the Jews by *Titus*, and continues it over them until this day: It is Christ that sends the sword and blood unto the Nations round about, for their iniquities: It is Christ that goeth forth on his red Horse of judgments, to War against *Babylon*, the Beast, and false Prophet, and all their cursed complices and adherents, *Rev. 19.* We may conceive, and conceive amiss, when we think that it is man that blows these coals of War and contentions in the world; but it is Christ that doth it, *Luk. 12. 49.* *I am come to send fire on the earth,* and *Mat. 10. 34.* *I come not to send peace, but a sword;* for I am come to set a man at variance against his Father, and the daughter, against her mother; and the daughter in Law, against her mother in Law; and *strangers* foes shall be they of his own household: And this fire hath been kindled among us, and other neighbour Nations; and who is able to put it out unless it be Christ, to whom power is given to compose all our differences and dissensions, who hath the Key of David, and opens; and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens: If Christ opens the sluice and door of his desolating judgments, who can shut it up, or keep them back? But if he shuts the door of his wrathful judgments, and sets a stop unto the current and progress of them, who can open it? For it is he alone that can treat War, and all the miseries thereof, and can again produce the happy fruits of tranquillity and peace.

Object. But if any one should unadvisedly Object, This were an evil to affirm that Christ sends the sword, and war into the world: or think it harsh that he that is the Lamb of God, should put on such a fiery posture, abhorrent to his meek and peaceable nature, or say it is not strange for the wicked to do this work, or to see fire come forth from a bramble, *Judg. 9. 15.* this were but ordinary; but to see fire come out from the Vine, from Christ, this is most strange and abhorrent to their understandings.

Answer. As Christ is the Lamb slain so also he is the Judge of all the earth, and a Judge you know, must have his Sheriffs, the Executioners of his Judgments and Sentences: So Christ takes the Sword, War, Famine, and Pestilence, they are the Executioners of Christ's Judgments against the delinquent wicked ones.

of the world, and so he uses them lawfully and justly: And for such as will not kiss the Son, obey him, fear him, and love him, he can be angry with them, though they be the Kings, the great ones, and Judges of the earth: *Psal. 2. 10, 11, 12.* Christ can raise up *Cyrus, Nebuchadnezzar, Heathen Kings*, and call them his Servants, and make them his Instruments to do his works of Judgments against his rebellious Prophets, and send them forth, as *Osman, Mahomet, Selimus, &c.* to be just Executioners of Gods wrath upon dead, formal, and luke warm christians; and therefore I say unto all such as have but the least spark of grace and true life in them, *bold fast, be watchful and repent, or else Christ will come upon thee suddenly, as a thief, both with his particular temporal Judgments, and with his eternal also.*

Ver. 4. *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.*

It may be first demanded who the person is that hath these few names in Sardis? Doubtless it is meant of the Angel, Pastor, or Minister of the church, who principally receives this charge, and to whom the whole is directed, to be made known unto the church to, and over which the Holy Ghost had made him Overseer, Pastor, or Angel.

*Thou hast, ~~thous~~, ~~under thy charge, a few~~ Names even in Sardis. Names are here put for Persons. *Act. 1. 1. 15.* The number of the Names (that is, of men or persons) that were in one place, were above an hundred and twenty: and *Rev. 1. 1. 13.* it is said, that in the Earth, ~~quæ~~ were slain of men, seven thousand, in the Greek it is ~~ἀνθρώπων~~. The names of men that were slain were seven thousand: And I conceive this word Names, is not used by the Spirit simply, to denote the persons of men, as thus, *Thou hast a few persons in Sardis, which have not defiled &c.* but also to demonstrate the quality of the persons, they were a few Names, that is, a few persons of Name and Quality, they were Names of men, or men of Name, of excellent spirits, tempers, weight, and quality, for they had not defiled their garments, they were not so touch as outwardly tainted by the common wickedness and iniquities of Sardis: and these poor souls shall walk with me in white; To walk with Christ is to be sharer and partaker with him in his Heavenly enjoyments: With whom we walk we communicate with him, enjoy his discourse, council, presence, familiarity, friendship, and all other comforts whatsoever, that is possibly so be enjoyed by him: And they shall not only so walk with Christ, but they shall walk with him in white. A white raiment was usually set by antiquity, on the acquitted, innocent, absolved person;*

John 5. 1. but a black on the guilty, and condemned: This hath some allusion to the former white Stone, which was given either to the conquering, or to the innocent absolved Saint: So to walk with Christ in white, is no more than to partake with Christ, either a free Absolution at the last day, or to be with him as white, innocent conquering Saints at the resurrection; for they are worthy, that is, those pure undefiled souls are accepted by me as worthy of such happiness. Note hence from the person that had these few names in Sardis.

Observ. 1. These Christians of the best Quality and Name, are under the charge and oversight of their Pastors and Angels.

*Thou hast a few names in Sardis: Christ is the supreme ruling, teaching and influencing head over his church; but the Pastor or Minister is the subordinate organical head to every particular church: And so the hand or eye cannot say unto the head, I have no need of thee, a body without a head will be but a trunk unfit for lively motion: So a church without a Pastor or Minister, may be a body, but very lifeless and useless unto its operations and offices. I can but judge them very immorrigous unto the sweet and easy yoke of Christ, that will not endure a Pastor, an Angel, a Minister over them, to precede in all official duties unto the flock of Christ: It is unto such that the Holy Ghost hath committed the oversight of the flock; and therefore all are to submit unto them, as unto the Lord: For though I should grant many things unto the members in common with their Officers, yet not so to be Officers or Pastors in common with them; for there are none such as Pastors of Pastors in the Gospel of Christ, but Pastors of the flock of Christ: And therefore as I could never brook a lawless community, or leveling in the churches of Christ, all to be Rulers and Teachers, and none to be taught and ruled; so neither would it comport with truth, according to my judgment, to admit of Pastors over Pastors, or one Presbytery over another, no farther then prudence will lead unto, but not of Divine right and equity. It is evident these seven Asian churches, and all the other the Primitive Apostolical ones, were Pastoral, Episcopal, Independent ones. I think it no Paradox to assert, that an Episcopal church may be Independent; for I take such a one to be of Divine right indeed, whilst the Prelatical Episcopal church hath lost its *presubst*, by exalting it self beyond Christ's bounds, and taking too much upon it.*

Observ. 2. That the pure undefiled Saints of Christ, are persons of high esteem and account with God.

*They are men of Name and Quality, God takes notice of them, as men of most excellent and eminent spirits; all the rest of Sardis besides them, are but such that had the name that they were living, but are dead; Those are they that *shall walk with Christ in white*; for they are worthy: All the rest of the world are*

not of the same value with these in the sight of God; for they are those for whom the world was made; yea, God reproves Kings for their laxes, saying, *Touch not mine Anointed*, Psal. 195. 15. They are God's Jewels, his Precious ones which he makes up in safety and security: When all the world is on fire, and combustion besides, they are in a Land of *Garden*, of light, peace, and comfort, Mat. 3. 17. And the great reason of this is, in that they have the image and likeness of God upon them, and his spirit dwelling in them, and every thing does love and highly esteem its like; for likeness is the root of love, much more God's, who is love it self, will highly esteem and love his Saints, being the workmanship of his own hands.

Even in Sardis then hast a few Names. Hence Note,

Obser. 3. That in the most corrupted Church state, Christ may have some chosen and precious Saints.

Sardis had but the name that she was living, and was dead; and yet in this nominal, dead, formal church, God had a few Names there that were precious to him. The church of God did never totally fail upon the earth, nor never shall, though the visibility thereof may fail, yet the invisible church will never fail: When all flesh had corrupted its ways, and wickedness of man grown great, and the earth filled with violence, before the Flood, Gen. 6. 11, 12, yet then was *Noe* undefiled, and a faithful Preacher of righteousness; yea, he was just and perfect in his generation, and walked with God. In the corrupted church state in the days of *Ahab*, when *Elijah* cut off the Prophets of the Lord, and set up Idolatries in the room of them, true worship of God, and the godly and righteous, so vexed and wasted, that *Elijah* the Prophet thought none but himself left in *Israel*: Even then the Lord tells him there were seven thousand which had not bowed the knee to *Baal*, 1 Kings, 1. 18.

In the time when Christ came in the flesh, which was in an exceeding bad and corrupted church state, and in a time when the Jewish church was never more corrupt than when he came; yet there was then a *Joseph*, a *Mary*, a *Zacharias*, and *Elisabeth*, a *Simeon*, and *Anna*, and some few others that truly feared God. In the darkest and deepest night of Popery, there were some faithful witnesses unto the truth: The Waldenses, the Abigenses, Pauperes, Lugdunenses, &c. of whom some of the Popish Writers themselves testify, that they were upright in their carriages, and believed aright concerning God; only they blasphemed the church of *Rome*: So there was a *Hus*, a *Jerome* of Prague, a *Wycliff*, *Berengarius*, *Peter de Bruis*, *Luther*, *Oecolomadius*, *Melanchthon*, &c. in a time and state bad enough: So here in England, when the church was exceeding corrupt under the Prelacy, yet then appeared here a *Cartwright*, *Hooker*, *Ames*, *Parker*, *Bolton*, *Robinson*, *Reynolds*, *Aymarworth*, *Baynes*, and many other

other precious Saints and faithful Witnesses unto the truths of Christ.

Obser. 4. God accepteth the pure and undefiled as worthy of eternal life.

at. 3. 8. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God: They are those that shall walk in white with Christ, and inherit the Kingdom with him.

Object. But if it be demanded, Doth not this assert a merit in works, or that purity in the life doth exact from God in the way of Justice, some answerable compensation to it?

Answer, first, and assert, That holiness or purity of heart is the descriptive quality of those that shall see God; they and they only (of Adult persons) are accepted by God to that high priviledge.

Secondly, I grant too, that the eternal life of happiness is set forth and given as a prize, as a reward, as a crown to the conquering Saints; so in this and the last chapter it is often promised unto such holy ones under such a notion of a crown and reward.

Thirdly, but I utterly deny that it hath the least proportion to factitious Divine Justice, or merit the least in strict Justice from God, towards eternal life.

1. Because eternal life is the free gift of God, and he giveth it to whom he pleaseth, Job, 17. 12; Job. 5. 10.

2. Because Divine Justice requires exact obedience, which saith that he that is guilty of the breach of ony article of the Law, is guilty of the transgression of the whole: For the best Saints being so imperfect in their obedience, that they come far short in obtaining any thing at the hands of God in strict Justice.

3. Because our sanctification and holiness is the alone work of God's own grace and spirit, and therefore improperly said to merit at his own hands. A child may merit from his Father in Justice, by his filial obedience, the parent being under a natural Law of compensation, as well as the child is under the law of obedience towards him: But God our heavenly Father is tied up unto no such Law, being a free agent, and giveth life to whom he pleases.

4. And therefore Lastly, Because man hath forfeited his first covenant of merit and life by righteousness in *Adam*, and that being made null, God hath instituted a most gracious one, wherein he hath freely given eternal life to all his chosen ones, merited by the blood of his Son, and received here in the first fruits thereof by faith and the sanctification of the spirit.

Object. But here comes the Sophistical Jesuites, and say, 'Tis true, in rigor or Justice we cannot merit at God's hands, we cannot give him *quid pro quo*, but in his favorable acceptance we may give

give him some satisfaction, wherewithal there is a kind of imperfect proportion to divine justice, and accepted by God in his goodness and mercy, as good payment from us; and if you will take it rather in their own words whome they designe, and say there is either, 1. *Satisfactio Justicie, ex rigore Justicie, ad absolutam & perfectam equalitatem quantitatis.* Or, 2. *Acceptationis facti ex gratia donante ad imperfectam equalitatem proportionis ex condigno.* The first satisfaction they deny, but the latter they grant, and assert that our own works though imperfect in themselves to answer strict Justice, yet being now dyed in the blood of Christ, becomes currant for good payment, and Christ having merited to let a valem upon them, now they are able to stand by themselves, and merit upon their own account at the hands of God. These are some of *Belarmino's* expressions.

I answer, This distinction of satisfaction in strict Justice, and satisfaction in favorable acceptance, is but vain and sophistical upon this Question: I grant that our good works and holiness done out of faith, are pleasing to God and accepted of him; but where doth it appear that God accepts them as the least satisfaction to his Justice in Scriptures? God is not like man in human satisfaction, ready to take twenty Pounds for one hundred Pounds from his debtor, where no more is to be had; God will make no such complemental compositions with his debtors: Divine Justice will exact the utmost farthing; either it will have full satisfaction of the sinner, or of his fugit: either of our selves, and upon our own persons; or upon Christ for us: And therefore it is vain to imagine such a facility or partiality in Divine Justice, as to be satisfied with a few poor unworthy rags of our own imperfect righteousness. No satisfactions will suit and comport with Divine Justice, but such as are by the same Justice reputed sufficient, such as are Christ's satisfactions, and they only can do the work: And therefore those pure undefiled names at *Sardis* are accounted worthy to walk with Christ in white; not out of their own merits, nor the least satisfaction that they can render unto Divine Justice, but out of God's mere gracious acceptance and free love towards them. They are worthy notwithstanding of Merit and Justice, but out of fitness, aptness, and excellency, in comparison of others: And so God accepts them as righteous, lovely, and worthy to be in his presence for ever, and ever.

Ver. 5. *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white rayment, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life: but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his Angels.*

Vers. 5. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white rayment, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life: but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his Angels.

To the overcoming Saints in *Sardis*, that shall escape the pollutions of the times, there is promised a glorious white Vestment, to represent the innocence of their bodies, and the majesty of the glory they shall enjoy, when Christ shall appear, with whom they shall walk in white, as in the former verse more fully. Hence Note.

Observ. *The future blessed state of the Saints, is not only a sinless innocent one, but a most glorious one also.*

This is manifested by their solemn investiture into that state, being clothed in white rayment, which doth typifie and represent, as the Priests vesture of old, both Innocency and Majesty: and there is all reason for it, for, *We are then made both Kings and Priests unto our God, Rev. 5. 10. and we shall reigne on earth.*

And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life. This is an other addition, or further degree of blessedness to the conquering Saints: The Spirit of God hath taken up this expression of the book of life, and writing in this book, and blotting out of it, from the manner of men, metaphorically borrowed from their practise, and is very often used in the Scriptures, as in that prayer of *Asa*, Exod. 32. 32. *I pray thee ratify me out of the book which thou hast written:* and according to that Imprecation of *David*, Psalm 69. 28. *Let them be purged out of the book of life:* and Rev. 22. 19. *If any man shall diminish of the words of the book of this Prophet, God shall take away his part out of the book of life:* add to these Psal. 139. 16. Dan. 12. 12. Rev. 10. 12. Mal. 3. 15. Rev. 20. 8. & 27. 8. All which do significie, that God hath (as it were) a book of remembrance, according to the practise of men, wherein he writeth and blots out, that the things therein signified may be made plain and obvious to our understanding. But by the way, we must not be so gross, to imagine that God hath a book for the help of his memory, or that he writeth or blotteth out, as men usually do: God is no such corporeal Being, to use such helps: but it is to be understood metaphorically, as abovesaid, and *per analogiam*, according to his condescension to the capacities of men; as when eyes, face, hearing, hands, &c. are ascribed unto God: He needs not books or writings for help of his knowledge or memory, for all things past, present, and to come, are in his sight. But to understand the terms a little more distinctly, know, God hath a double book of life, wherein he is said to write and blot out: The one is that of his Decrees of his Election unto life; the other is the book of the execution of those Decrees.

In

In the first book, persons may be said to be written in it two ways, either really, or seemingly so unto others: for the first, they can never be expunged or blotted out of that book, unless Divine Omnipotence and Omnipotency should fail, that is engaged for their support and perseverance; which more fully hereafter shall be declared. But the second sort, that are but seemingly written in this book of life in the judgement of others, may be said to be blotted out, and cast-aways, for in truth they were never really written in it. So also in the other book of the execution of God's decrees, persons may be said to be written in that also two ways. First really and in truth, when God executeth his decree of Election, by bringing and receiving his elect ones into the Gospel covenant by believing, and so carrolls them in the number of his faithful ones, church, and family. Secondly, Others also may be said to be written in this book, which are but only seeming and titillate christians, in respect they have taken up the profession of the faith, and are added to the church visible as members thereof, and are so justly repudiated by others, because they have submitted to the ordinances of the church, which is sufficient, nothing appearing to the contrary, to denominate them Saints, called elect, and written in the book of life.

Now when God is said to blot out names (names being put for persons) out of the book of life, it only signifies, that God will manifestly declare and make it known, both to the parties themselves, and others, that they never were true members of the church, nor in the state of election and salvation, nor never written in the book of life. *I will not blot his name out of the book of life.* Under this negative promise unto the conquering Saint, is contained a strong Affirmation of the continuance of the contrary blessing: Christ will not only not blot out his name out of the book of life, that is, confirm and continue his undoubted right and title unto eternal life, but he will also manifestly declare and make known unto others his lawful Title and interest, according as he hath ordained him thereunto in his book of life from all eternity: and so the subsequent words do intimate; *I will confess his name before my Father, and before his Angels:* often in Scripture things are then said to be done, when they are only manifested to be done, according to that saying, *Res tum demum dicuntur fieri cum incipiuntur manifestari.* Reg. Petrum. As to instance by *Heb. 1. 5.* *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* The Spirit in that Scripture not intending that the Son was not begotten of the Father before that day when that word was uttered, but that on that day he was more eminently declared and manifested to be the only begotten Son of God, then formerly: So that when it is said in Scripture, that God will blot their names out of the book of life, it only imports, That God will discover to themselves and others

others, that their names were never written in the book of life, nor had any right or interest at all in election or salvation, farther then in the outward appearance. From the words Note, *I. Observ. That the eternal state of God's chosen ones, is sealed and secured by God from everlasting.*

Their names are written in the eternal book of God's decrees of life; and he will not blot them out; for being once enrolled in the book of God's election, and among the catalogue of his Saints in the church invisible, they can never be razed out; for *the foundation of God continueth sure.* Rom. 9. 11. and hath a two-fold seal, 2 Tim. 2. 19. First, God's knowledge, whereby he knoweth them that are his. Secondly, His Spirit of Regeneration, which sealeth them unto eternal life. Now if any thing would blot out those that are thus enrolled or written in the book of life, it must be their sins and pollutions that would do it: but the sins of God's chosen ones, cannot move the Lord to raze us out of his book of life; for, then the foresight and knowledge of our sins in God's eternal council, would much more have hindered him from chusing and enrolling us in the book of his Election; seeing every one knoweth, that a lefs cause will hinder the choice of any, then move them to reject the person once chosen: nay rather, because the Lord hath chosen us, therefore he will give us his holy Spirit, whereby he will preserve us (though not altogether from falling into sin, yet) from finally lying dormant and impenitent therein: and as he hath freely chosen us to eternal life, without any respect to our own worthiness; so also he will freely execute this decree, by giving us all the good means conducing to that end.

Object. But some may say, Though the conquering Saints are secure, and their names shall not be blotted out of this book, yet this doth intimate, that others whose names are written therein, for their sinful pollutions and iniquities unrepented of, may be blotted out; according to that of *Exod. 32. 33.* *Whoever hath sinned against me (saith God) him will I blot out of my Book.* And as David prayeth, *Psal. 69. 28.* *Let them be put out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.*

Answ. First, This threatening is not against the true members of Christ, or his church, who are enrolled in the book of life, but those that are the members of the visible church only, and are only seemingly written in the book of life; members in theew, and not in truth; branches in the Vine by profession, but not in practice and life; of the Lord's family, and in the number of his servants, in their own, and others opinion, but not really and in truth according to God's estimation.

Secondly, Whereas God saith he will blot such out of his book; we are not to understand thereby, that he would blot them out of the book of his election unto life, wherein they were never

ver written; or, that he would reject them whom he had chosen; but that he would raze them out of the other book of life, the book of the execution of his decrees, to wit, the book and roll of his visible church: and that it might be manifestly declared that they who in their own opinion, and in respect of their outward profession in the opinion of others, might seem to be written in both books, or both parts of the book of life, of that of God's decrees, which only relates to the invisible members and church of Christ; and also of that other book or roll of the visible church, yet were not in truth ever enrolled in either, farther then in outward profession and appearance only.

And lastly, Whereas *David* prays, that the obstinate enemies of God and himself, might be put out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous, is no more, but as if *David* had said, Do not (O Lord) write them down, or reckon them in the number of thy faithful ones; or, if they come to be numbered among thy church and people, and to be accounted written in the book of the living, in respect of their outward profession, and external walking with the people of God, yet discover such, and display them, that it may manifestly appear that they were never truly written in the book of the living, nor are to be accounted among the righteous, that so they may be put out of the company of thy church and children, that all may know that they were but hypocrites. For in regard that God's decree of election is unsearchable to man, those are said to be elected and written in the book of life, who are outwardly called, and added to the visible church, professing themselves members thereof, which are the outward, but not the infallible signs of God's election, because they are common both to hypocrites and sound believers: and so likewise God is said to blot persons out of this book, whose sins and hypocries are discovered, and so thrust out of the company of the faithful; and therefore *David*, because he would have God's vengeance against these wicked ones plainly manifested, desireth the Lord to discover them, that they have no portion, right, or part in the book of the living, nor worthy to be written or numbered among the righteous, but that all might sensibly discern them to be but reprobates. And thus far *David*'s prayer is imitable, as unto us.

Ques. But by the way I shall put a question, Whether it is lawful or consonant to the will of God, for any of the Saints of God, to pray to God, as *Moses* did, *Exod. 32. 32.* *I pray thee raze me out of the book which thou hast written:* and as *Paul* wished, *To be separated from Christ for his brethren according to the flesh,* *Rom. 9. 3.* Or secondly, To pray that other mens names, though wicked, may be blotted out of the book of the living, as *David* in *Psal. 69. 28.* prayed against the enemies of God and himself?

Ans. 1. It is not lawful to pray for any thing contrary to the known

known will of God, for there are no commands or promises annexed to such a prayer, but abundantly to the contrary, therefore surely such prayer must be most vain and sinful; for neither *Moses* nor *Paul* were bound to prefer the good of their brethren, before the fruition of God, and their own salvation.

Moses nor *Paul* did pray so absolute, but conditionally, like to that of Christ, *Father, if it be possible, let this exp pass from me:* so they, if it would stand with God's will, and be approved by him, could desire and wish to be razed out, and anathematized from the roll of God's church, and from life it self, so that they could deliver their lost brethren of Israel from the curse and damnation that hung over them for their infidelity and impenitency: this they did desire under the loss of their own salvation, had it been possible. But whether *Moses* or *Paul* had so an eye and respect in these particular prayers to the will of God, is uncertain: for I think it is no sin to say, that either *Moses* or *Paul* might be carried aside by an over mis-led zeal to their brethren the Jews: for, *In many things we sin all*, saith the Apostle *James, cap. 3. 2.*

3. Lastly, if *David* did pray unto God absolutely, that the names of the ungodly might be put out of the book of the living, I think it not warrantable nor imitable in us. *David* being a Prophet, and having the spirit of prophesie, he well knew against whom he prayed, prophesied, and imprecated, and so his prayers and imprecations to this effect, were but as to many prophetical denunciations, and predictions of God's judgements against his impenitent enemies; which are no patterns or examples to us: for we are commanded to pray for all men, even for the conversion of the most vilest persons in the world, as long as there is hope of their returning. But secondly, Though we may not pray absolutely, yet we may conditionally, with submission to God's will, against all his, and our antichristian enemies, that God would either convert them, or bring them to shame and ruin, that his glory, and the Saints peace and comforts may be more enlarged and multiplied thereby. But to proceed.

I will confess his name before my Father, and before his Angels.

Christ having assured the overcoming Saints of *Sardis*, that they should participate of his glory, and be clothed with majesty in the other world, and having undoubtedly assured them the confirmation and continuance of their blessed estate, and their right thereunto, in not blotting out their names out of his blessed roll and register of the book of life; and having promised not only to do all this good for them, but will also acknowledg them, confess them to be his by name, before God and his holy Angels; that is, as if Christ had said, Those whom I present before thee, O Father, and thy holy ministering Spirits, clothed in white rayment, in innocency and majesty, and which are from eternity registered in thy book, I avouch and acknowledge them to be

of my own name, members of my own body, anointed with the same unction and Spirit that I am of, truly christians, faithful followers of me and my doctrine thorow their whole course of regeneration, and new life which they have led unto this present day. Hence Note,

Observ. That Christ will not be ashamed, but will publicly own and acknowledge his faithful ones at the last day, before God his Father, and all his holy Angels.

This he promises Mat. 10. 32. to confess and own them before his Father in heaven, who shall faithfully confess and own him here on earth. Christ calls such here his sheep, his friends, his brethren, his members, yea himself, by his own name, *Christ*, 1 Cor. 12. 12. and therefore Christ tells them John 20. 17. *I ascend to your Father, and my Father, to my God, and your God.* And seeing God and Christ are not ashamed to be called their God, and their Christ in this life, surely in the life to come they will not be ashamed of them, but will acknowledge them to be the godly, or God-like christians, that faithfully owned God and Christ in their several generations.

This is a great motive and encouragement unto us, boldly, and with constancy, in the worst of times, and under the greatest defections, to confess and own so worthy a Lord and Master as Christ and his ways, seeing we shall be no losers by it, but rather great gainers, for before God and his Angels he will not spare by name to confess us, and to honour us as his own before so glorious a presence, although of our selves we be most unworthy creatures. Who ever truly honoured God and Christ in an open sincere profession, and following of their ways of truth, and was not honoured both by God and Christ? *Them that honour me, I will honour (saith God) and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed.* 1 Sam. 2. 30. If we only lose our honour among men for our profession, and among the basest and vilest sort (for all scornful ungodly ones are so to be accounted, be they never otherwise in the eye of the world so great, rich, mighty or honourable, and win honour with God; if we be vilified on earth, and among earthly minded men, and be accepted in heaven, we have no cause to be discouraged, or murmur at our loss. When Christ owned *Stephen* from heaven in the midst of his enemies, it was more then a sufficient recompence for his stoning, *Acts 7.* What loss did the three children sustain when they kept their consciences undefiled, by not obeying *Nebuchadnezzar's* command, in worshipping his golden Image, but openly professing, and praying with their windows open to the God of Israel? *Dan. 3.* Did not the Lord for this their faithful honouring of him, honour them with his presence, with safety and deliverance, and made them ever-living examples to all that truly fear God, to trust in him for help in all extremities that fall on them for his names sake o all generations for ever?

But

But if it be asked, How we shall honour God faithfully this way?

It is answereed, we must (as those few undefiled names, or Saints of *Sardis*) overcome the corruptions and pollutions of the times, by witnessing against them, and openly stand for, and profess the contrary truths and ways of God, and follow the advice of *Paul to Timothy*, 2 Tim. 2. 21. *If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use.* And therefore let the understanding christian mark and consider this, as it is in the advice of the Spirit in the immediate subsequent verse.

Verse 6. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.

This verse formerly opened, therefore needs no farther explanation.

Verse 7. And to the Angel of the church of Philadelphia, write, These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth.

This Epistle inscribed to the Angel of the church of *Philadelphia*, is directed also from Christ under various remarkable descriptions for holiness, truth, and sovereignty, having the key of *David*, which he beareth not idly, for with it he openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth. This church of *Philadelphia* was one of those seven famous churches situate in the lesser *Asia*, now called *Natolia*, whose Angel or Pastor was *Demas* or *Damias*, as *Ignatius* Epistles testifie. And indeed it was a church, by the Spirit's description, which was the fairest among the Sisters, the most comly, orthodox, and sound among all the seven, whose very name doth set forth her gracious nature and qualities; *Philadelphia* signifying *Brotherly love*, or *love of the Brethren*; which doth notably agree to the excellency of grace that was found in this church, being not openly convicted of any crime, but altogether extolled for her gracious deportment. M. Brightman makes this his darling and beloved *Philadelphia* to typifie and represent his reformed *Geneva*, *French*, or *Scottish* church model; but upon further enquiry, I doubt his counterpart will fall short of their first pattern in purity and soundness; and he makes the church of *England*, as then governed by Bishops, for their luke-warmness and remissness in matters of Religion, to be the counterpart of *Laodicea*, his blear-eyed *Leah*: but *Philadelphia*, the *Geneva*, *Helvetian*, and *French Reformed* church, begun by *Zwinglius* and *Calvin*, to be his much adored

adored darling and *Rachel*: and so he makes *Sardis* to represent the German Reformed church under *Luther* and his associates: *Pergamus* to represent the degenerate church of *Rome*, as then in being about the time of *Luther*; and so upward he makes the several states and ages of the church, the counterpanes of *Thyatira*, *Smyrna*, and *Ephesus*, unto the Apostles times.

But by what warrant M. *Brightman* does this, or why he is so luxuriant in his applications, I know not; and I conceive, under due respect to so learned an Author as M. *Brightman*, that it is beside the intention of the Spirit, that ever those seven Asian churches should typise or represent any other churches, or state of churches that should rise in futurity; only they are left unto us, and to all ages to come, as examples and patterns, to understand and know the dealings of God with them; that if we be partakers in the same graces with them, we shall have the same encouragements, approbation, and reward as they had; but if we be found guilty of the same transgressions as they were, we shall fall under the same judgements as they did; and that that made M. *Brightman* thus over-free in his applications in his counterpanes, I verily believe to be the variety of conditions both good and bad, found in those seven churches, which by a good wit, may be stretch'd out to represent the condition and state of any church whatsoever, which is not altogether beside the scope or intention of the Spirit in them: for it is often inculcated in this and the former chapter, *He that hath ears, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*. What was written unto them, was not only for themselves, but for the cognizance of all others in the future also, coming under the same conditions and qualifications with themselves. But to proceed.

These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, &c.

These words contain a description of Christ, who sends this Epistle to the Angel of *Philadelphia*, whose two first properties are taken out of the nature of the Son of God, to wit, Holiness and truth: Christ makes this discovery of himself, suitable to the condition of the church of *Philadelphia*, which was an eminent shining star, both for the profession of the truth, and for holiness: to the other the more delinquent churches, he discovers himself in another posture, *with eyes and feet like burning brass*, and *with a two-edged sword proceeding out of his mouth*: but with the gracious he appears more gracious, and to the truly godly he appears in his own proper nature, in Truth and Holiness. Hence Note

Observ. *Christ discovers himself unto his people, not only as the holy One, but as the God of Truth also.* *Ταῦτα ἔγραψε ὁ ἀνθρώπος.* *These things saith he that is holy, he that is true.* They are much deceived that aim at holiness without the truth. They that own not Christ according to the truth, can never be truly holy ones, or sanctified persons; for truth sanctifies; *John 17. 17.* Let their

their actions be never so highly estimated in the eye of the world, as proceeding from holy self-denying persons, yet if they be not done in the truth, that is, from a true fountain, and to right ends, they will lose their reward, and be at best but as tinkling Cymbals. What profit doth it yeild the monastical Votaries of *Rome* when they devote themselves to so rigid austerities, and pretend so high to holiness, whilst they have banished truth from their borders, when neither their ends nor their aims are right according to the truth of God's word? To what end is the Quakers austere carriage, and outward holiness, whilst they deny Redemption or Satisfaction by the blood of Christ? Will their inherent holiness, or their austere upright carriage, serve instead of Christ's imputed righteousness? Holiness and truth must go together to denominate a true Saint. Heathen Philosophers will quite out-strip the best of christians in divers acts of virtue; but when proceeding from a christian according unto truth, they are to be called by another name; holy or godly actions. If you try the doctrines of men only by the holiness of the persons that brings them, you may entertain errors instead of truth; for truth is not always with the most seeming holiest men: But if doctrines come from persons holding the truth in sincerity, and professing the same truth in purity and integrity of their souls, doubtless such doctrines in their first origin were from heaven, and not from men. Hence it is that the Spirit of God is not only called the holy Spirit, but also the Spirit of Truth, *John 14. 17.* because it leadeth and guideth into all truth: and wheresoever the Spirit cometh, as a holy Spirit, to sanctifie, it cometh in the first place as a Spirit of Truth, to lead the soul into the ways of truth. If Christ makes any discoveries unto thy soul, it will be as unto *Philadelphia*, as the holy One, and as the true One: *As he is the way unto holiness, so he is the truth, and the life; and no man cometh unto the Father, but in, by, and through him, John 14. 6.*

Which hath the Key of David, that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.

These words have relation to that prophesie of *Isaiah, cap. 22. 20, 22.* about the calling of *Eliakim* the son of *Hilkiah*, who should be a Father unto Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah, into whose hands the Government should be committed; and in vers. 22. *The Key of the House of David will I lay upon his shoulder* (*said the Lord*) *so he shall open, and no man shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.* This *Eliakim* in the days of *Hezekiah*, was his chief Steward, or master of his household, as appears by *2 Kings 18. 18, 26.* and it seems by the transactions between him and *Senacharib*, none were suffered to go in or out to treat with *Senacharib*, but *Eliakim*, and whom he did approve of; he was a man in great authority with the King, and carried the Key and Sovereignty over his whole household; and therefore he is prophesied

phised of by *Isaiah*, to come, or to be called again of God, not in person, but in his anitype and true counterpart, Jesus Christ, the true *Eliakim*, who beareth the Keys of *David*, &c. Christ may well be typified by *Eliakim*, and to be called the spiritual *Eliakim* promised in *Isa. 22.* both for his name and nature: *Eliakim* signifying (as *Hieron.* *de interpretatione nominum*) the God of the Resurrection, or God that rose again; and who was this true *Eliakim* but Christ?

In the next place, Christ was descended from this *Eliakim*, *Luke 3. 30.* therefore rightly brought by the Spirit in *Isaiah* to typifie him forth.

But lastly, and chiefly, Christ is the true spiritual *Eliakim*, in respect of his kingly office and Sovereignty which he beareth over his spiritual house, his church, as *Eliakim* bore it over the house of *David*.

The Key is put metonymically, the ensign of Authority, for Authority it self: But why the Key of *David*, and not the Key of the House of *David*? *Isa. 22. 22.*

I answer, Either it is to be taken metonymically, the Master being put for the House; or else for the more excellency of this Key that Christ bears before that of *Eliakim's*, the truth it self exceeding the Type: *Eliakim* was but an inferior Minister, as the Steward; and that in the family of *David's*; but Christ he bore the Key of *David*, that is, that was born before or by *David* himself, due unto the highest Governor, and extending to the whole Kingdom: And therefore excels that of *Eliakim's*, being limited only to the household of *David*.

But why is the Key of *David* brought by the Spirit to represent Christ's Sovereignty and Kingdom over his church?

I answer, for divers reasons.

First, God promised an everlasting Kingdom to *David*; and therefore a fit Type of the church of Christ, who are loved with the everlasting and sure mercies of *David*.

Secondly, *David's* Kingdom was over the Israel of God; so Christ over the true Israel of God according to the Spirit.

Thirdly, *David* was an absolute Lord over his Kingdom, he suffered no *Jebusites* nor *Canaanites* to domineer within his Realm and Jurisdiction: so Christ within the verge of his Government and Sovereignty, he suffers no unclean *Canaanite* to rule and reign, nor any unclean thing to enter therein; but he will be sole Lord and Sovereign within his House, as was *David*, and therefore in the next words it is said, *That openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.* The same Key that openeth, the same Key shutteth: Christ's Key, Power, or Authority, doth open and shut in a threefold respect.

First, It opens the true Doctrine of Salvation and Redemption by Christ, that none ever hereafter shall shut it up, or obscure it:

it; and again, he shuts it up to many unworthy and impenitent people, which none, but by him, shall be able again to open and discover.

Secondly, It opens and shuts in respect of the Government and Sovereignty that Christ bears over his Kingdom, his holy Temple and Church, either in admission or exclusion of members, *Isa. 9. 6.* *Zeob. 6. 12.* and herein no man can open or shut, admit or exclude, but as Christ hath laid down the rules and directions thereunto in his word.

Thirdly, It opens and shuts into Christ's hidden, mystical, and everlasting Kingdom, the church of the Elect and invisible Saints, and to whom Christ doth open to enter herein, no man can shut, and to whom Christ shutteth, no man can ever open: so absolute a Lord is Christ in the whole work and administration of his Kingdom, that what he does, no man can undo or hinder, and what he will not have done, none can bring to pass; *He openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.* From the words thus explicated,

Observ. *That Christ is the sole absolute Lord, sovereign Giver, and Disposer of all the blessings relating unto his Kingdom.*

Christ is a Lord by power, *Mat. 28. 18.* 2. He is a Lord by purchase, *Rom. 7. 20.* 3. He is a Lord by conquest, *John 16. 30.* 4. He is a Lord by donation, *Ps. 2. 8.* 5. He is a Lord by election, as from God, *Mat. 12. 18.* *Isa. 22. 20. &c.* And doubtless such a Lord hath an absolute power over all the Ministrations of his Kingdom, to promote, execute, or hinder as he pleaseth. The magistrate walks not in this sphere, he hath another Kingdom to deal with; the Magistrate cannot here shut nor open, though *Erastus* vainly dreamt the contrary. Christ's Key, or the Key of *David*, only fits this lock. As the spiritual Key of *David* cannot open or shut in the civil kingdoms of the world, neither can their civil keys open or shut in the spiritual house of *David*, being fitted for another lock; and who proves the contrary, disorders the whole lock, and brings always ruine instead of blessing upon the experiencers thereof. Christ sits not upon *Cesar's* Throne, nor *Cesar* upon his: Each must remember and keep their place and station. If Christ open with his Key, and receive into his visible Kingdom, *Cesar* hath no key to shut out: If Christ shut against any, *Cesar* hath no key to open. *Τὰ τῷ δῆμῳ τῷ θεῷ.* *Cesar* may shut the door to true Saints, and open it to the debauched world, and so make an Image like to that of *Nebuchadnezzar's*, whose feet were partly iron, partly clay: But when Christ in his Ministry opens and shuts, there is such an excellent Image erected, like the first part of that in *Dan. 2. 32.* *Whose Head was of fine gold, his Breast and Arms of silver.* It was a notable and noble saying of *Constantine* the Emperour, unto the Pastors and Bishops of his time, *Vos estis in Ecclesia, sed ego extra Ecclesiam Episcopus.*

Though he was the great champion of the church, and the Christians temporal Saviour, yet he would not meddle with opening or shutting in Christ's church, nor extort the Key of David, or Christ's, out of their hands to whom Christ left it; for what is done by them, is done by Christ, as by his delegated power; what they binde in earth, is bound in heaven; and what they loose on earth, is loosed in heaven. Christ will not suffer any to wield his Keys, but those to whose hands he hath committed them, according to his own method and way of directions: who uses them contrary to this, they will find them Scorpions in their hands, ready to bite and destroy them, instead of healing and curing. Remember the example of *Uzziah*, and tremble, 2 Chron. 26.16. Was it not the downfall to Popery, when Spiritual men turned Layicks, and Bishops became Princes? And on the other side, Secular Princes handled the Spiritual Keys, opened and shut as they pleased, made Laws, Edicts, and Rules unto the church, which was Christ's and his churches prerogative only? What undid our late Episcopal hierarchy in *England*, but mixing sacred things with profane, making Christ's and *Cæsar's* Laws all one? The Bishop, he was made a temporal Lord, to act in the Parliamentary and civil affairs of the Nation; and in requital hereof, the supreme Magistrate, he is made supreme Head of the church, to enact what Laws he pleaseth, as in reference to the church, and to open and shut to whom he wil, by his high courts of Delegates and high commission, &c. such a church, such a head, a civil church, a civil head: such a church, such laws, such officers, such keys, such power: all prudentials, and all of the present worlds wisdom and fabricating, and therefore not strange that the fabrick lasted no longer, but fell within few ages after the first structure thereof. And is it not now to be feared, that the church amongst us may be lulled asleep, as in the lap of *Constantine*, by over-much indulgence and temporal honours cast upon her, and her Ministers? Though I am not an enemy to their just maintenance and temporal comforts, yet I am jealous of them, that all is not Lamb-skin that appears so about them, but that somwhat (if not too much) of the Foxes tayl lies undiscovered within: What means else the bleatings of the cattle? I mean, their pressing after preferments, extraneous as to their churches, as Heads of Universities, State-chaplains, great Parsonages, Commissioners and Tryers, &c. and so by reason of the want of Christ's own Key, do often open to persons against whom Christ hath shut, and shut against some to whom Christ hath opened. So fallible are men that open with the wooden key of their own Politiques: the Lord deliver our Sovereign Magistrate from the snares of these spiritual Machiavilians, or Machiavilian Doctors, that do teach the Magistrate to lay his Politiques as rules to Christ's church; that would have him open, where Christ shuts; and shut, where Christ opens. It is

is equally dangerous unto both Magistrate and Minister, to move or act out of their own proper spheres; but acting in their own Orbs, the one in his Civil Government and State, the other in his Spiritual policy and church, so both becomes gracious and honourable in their respective governments and dominions.

Quest. But what? Shall not christian Magistrates do nothing in the church, or execute no part of their Authority therein, which God hath given them for the good of the church?

I answer, First, The Magistrate may exercise his authority for the good of the church in several respects,

First, In protecting, encouraging, and countenancing the church in the service of Christ, and defending their liberty therein, and so become Nursing Fathers unto the church.

Secondly, As Christ does approve and command obedience from all to Magistrates, and their Laws, as for God's sake, Rom. 13. So Magistrates should approve and command Christ's Laws and Government to be observed of all within their respective boundaries and jurisdictions.

Thirdly, If any proves turbulent, seditious, or factious in the church, under pretence of liberty, and so become a peace-breaker in the Commonweal, the Magistrate may restrain him by his civil power.

Fourthly, If any church member become a blasphemer, an idolater, an open delinquent against the first Table, or transgressor of the second, the Magistrate may chaste him for it, over and above the censure of the church; not as required thereunto by the church; but by virtue of his own civil Laws, that equally reaches all persons that transgres them; whether Ecclesiastiques or others.

2. But secondly in the Negative, I answer, That Magistrates have nothing to do, nor are competent Judges, as Magistrates, of controversial points, opinions, doctrines, or of things merely relating to the church; Christ never endued the Magistrate with such a power: Therefore the argument is very prevalent, a Negative, That they have no such power. The church alone (under Christ) is endued with that power of trying doctrines, suppressing errors in opinions and judgements, according to the rule of the Word. Now to whom this rule was given, the foresaid power was given; but the rule was committed to the church only, and not to Magistrates, Mat. 18. therefore the said power of trying doctrines, and suppressing errors, was committed only to the church, and not to Magistrates.

Object. But may not Magistrates suppress errors, and use their authority to that end, when they are thereunto well advised, by a Learned Assembly of Divines, or able Ministers of the church?

Answ. The Ministers of Christ, if they be such advisers here-

in, do first betray their trust and calling in their Master's service, into the hands of the Magistrate, plainly acknowledging, that their Lord and Master hath not provided an Armory sufficient in his House and Kingdom to overthrow errors, as well as means for their discovery. Is not this to run for carnal weapons, whilst they lay by those made by God, spiritual ones, and mighty through God, to pull down Powers, Principalities, and all the works of darkness.

Secondly, If Magistrates act thus upon the advice of others, they must not only see with other mens eyes, and act upon an implicite faith, but do also hereby become but the executioners of their Assemblies Decrees: What more doth the Popish Princes, when they execute the Edicts of the Romish conclave? And what otherwise did Pilate, when he became the executioner of the Priests sentence upon Christ, in crucifying him? A Sea-mark to all to take notice on this account.

Thirdly, Magistrates, as Magistrates, are not to suppress errors, because Christ hath other Laws, Ordinances, and Ways to suppress them, then what Magistrates, as such, can take cognizance of, 1 Tim. 1. 20. Mat. 18. 17. 1 Cor. 5. 4, 5. and by those Laws in the Apostles and Primitive times were errors depressed and punished, and not by the Laws of Magistrates, there was no appealing unto Cesar for this work.

Object. But some Erastianizing, or rather sycophantizing Doctors of these days, that are willing and ready to gratifie the Magistrate with a boon more then is justly due unto him, comes and objects: Is not the Magistrate subordinate, as unto Christ as Mediator, to make Laws for him, and to rule next and immediate under him in his church?

Ans. Indeed this objection was of some weight, when by Act of Parliament Henry 8. was made Supreme Head of the church, and whilst the sound thereof was continued down to his Successors, even till ten years since, in the constant publicke prayers for a blessing on the chief Magistrate, under the Title of the Supreme Head of the church, next and immediate under Christ: Then I say this objection was somewhat; but now it is judged to favour of too much levity and ostentation.

Secondly, But to answer more fully. I grant that all Magistrates are subordinate unto Christ, not only by the law of creation and gubernation, by which (as God) he rules the whole Universe; but also, by the law of Redemption, and his Mediationship; so by him Kings reign, and decree justice. If Christ had not died, there had been no King or Subject in the whole world: There's a common temporal salvation attain'd for all by the death of Christ; all had so died, if Christ had not died. Many have benefit by the death of Christ this way in a temporal salvation, which shall never taste the benefit of Christ's death savingly, or eternally.

ly. Christ is a Saviour of all, but especially of those that believe. So I say, all Sovereign Authorities in the world, have a being by virtue of Christ's death and Mediationship, and by virtue of that purchase, are subordinate unto him, holding their Kingdoms and Principalities, as in chief from him; for all power is given unto him as a reward of his sufferings, and the travels of his soul, both in heaven and in earth; Matth. 28. 18. In heaven over the Saints militant and triumphant; and in earth, over all Powers and principalities thereof. So that Christ hath at present a two-fold kingdom and people to govern and rule; the one is of the world, and the Nations thereof, which now he governs and rules only providentially, by placing Kings and Princes over them, to rule and reign next and immediate under him, by laws which the Legislators conceive most conducing to the well-being of their States and Kingdoms: and herein Christ's concurrence is no more but in common providence and preservation, which he exercises equally towards all the works of his creation and redemption. But he hath another Kingdom and people to rule and govern, which are a spiritual people, his church, which were the main and principal purchase of his death: Christ hath another eye, a more distinguishing respect to those then to the others, and therefore more especially he provides for them, to reign and rule over them with special and peculiar Laws, suiting to their spiritual conditions; not that Christ exempts them from the wholesome temporal laws of Magistrates, but that he suits them laws and ordinances fit for his own body, whereof he himself is Head, *influendo & infundendo*: And for this spiritual body and oeconomy, Christ hath his Laws, his Ordinances, and his subordinate Officers, which are for the perfecting of the body, till all come to the unity of the faith, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, Eph. 4. 12. And amongst the whole catalogue of Christ's Officers, we can find no mention of King, Prince, or Parliament, that are ordained to such a work, and therefore sure their work is another work then to make Laws for so spiritual a people as Christ's church is; they are to hear no other voice but their masters, nor to derogate so far from their spiritual Head, Lord, and Sovereign, as to suffer any to reign and rule over them in this spiritual oeconomy, but him alone who hath his Laws, his Ordinances, his Officers, to which they must obey, and he substitutes none next and immediate under him in this his dispensatory Kingdom of Grace, but his Vicar general, the holy Spirit, which doth virtuate all his holy Laws and Ordinances unto their ends: And therefore such Powers of the world as go about as subordinate to Christ, to make and impose Laws on the church of Christ, should as soon attempt to give Laws and Ordinances to the Stars of heaven; for though they are creatures of this world, yet too high for their laws to reach: so are the other Stars,

Stars, God's churches, for they are from heaven, and born from above, neither are they of this world: and therefore, how vain and absurd it is, for the Magistracy of this world to make laws and rules for them that have their conversation in heaven, and live in another world: they live in heaven, and by heavenly laws they are governed; their life is hid with God in Christ, and Christ's Edicts they only hear and follow: They live in a spiritual blessed state, and nothing but spiritual Laws will they hearken to: Their lot is fallen into an *Utopia*, and none but *Utopian* laws shall be their rules: But if they fall as men let the laws of men take hold upon them: Though man cannot make Laws suitable to the Saints conditions, yet if the Saints transgress the wholesome Ordinances of man, they shall justly suffer as men, and not as Saints; for, in things honest and indifferent, the canon is universal: *Let every soul be subject to the higher Powers*, whether Saint or other, Therefore give God his due, and Cesar his.

Vers. 8. *I know thy works, behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my Word, and hast not denied my Name.*

Christ comes to a narration of the gracious works of the church of *Philadelphia*; and first tells what he hath done for her: *Behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it*: As if Christ had said, Behold, I have given thee a fair opportunity and access to the knowledge of my Gospel, and to preach the same to others, and none shall be ever able to bereave or hide the same from thee any more: for an open door is either put for the power of preaching the Gospel, *Col. 4. 13.* as the Apostle *Paul* would have the *Colossians* to pray earnestly to God for him, *That God would open a door of speech unto him*. Or secondly, For a readiness of the reception of the Gospel, as *Paul* in *1. Cor. 16. 9.* *A great and effectual door is opened unto me*: and *2 Cor. 2. 12.* And this door is opened, when mens hearts are opened, as was *Lidias*, ready to receive the truth revealed by the Spirit of Truth. The church of *Philadelphia* may be said to have this double door opened, a free power given her by Christ to preach the Gospel, and ready and willing hearts to receive it, which no man should be able to take away from her: for it is the great Key-bearer of *David* himself that hath opened it; and maugre all the malice of devils, and wicked men in their hellish designs, it can never be obscured and shut up more. Hence Note,

Observ. *That it is Christ alone that vouchsafes, and gives fair opportunities, and accesses to preach the Gospel, and opens the hearts of the bearers for a kindly entertainment of it also.*

'Tis not the force of man's wit, conceit or eloquence of words will

will open this door, either to one self, or others. Christ must first open and give a door of utterance, or else the tongue will be as dumb as *Zachariah's*, before *John* was born, unto all Gospel mysteries: Next, the hearers will be as deaf unto the sound thereof, as dumb unto the utterance of it, before the Spirit comes and works kindly on their hearts, to a fruitful reception thereof. How possibly else could twelve plain Tradesmen, Mechanicks, Fishermen, &c. go on with that boldness in preaching the Gospel, and have that door of utterance and entertainment almost in the whole world, amongst inveterate and malicious enemies of God and Christ; if the great Key-bearer of *David* had not touched their tongues, and unshut their mouths, and ~~the~~ hearts of their hearers both at once; the one with a power of speaking, the other with a power and willingness of hearing, receiving, and treasuring up what they had heard and learned. What a large door hath Christ laid open since the first days of reformation, to this present day: This could never be attained unto by the power of man, but by Christ, who by weak and despicable things and persons, hath confounded the wise and mighty of the antichristian world: as *Luther* was wont to say, consider with what weapons I have overcome their errors, I have never touched them with a finger, but Christ hath destroyed them all with the Spirit of his mouth, i. e. the word of his Gospel. What doings, what imprisonings, what finings, what punishments, what tortures, what punishments, what deaths did the old Popish Doctors and clergy, and of late, the Prelatical Bishops raise and invent to shut up this door that Christ had opened to his faithful witnesses in this land: and yet, what did they prevail and get thereby, but by dashing themselves against the corner stone, and by endeavouring to suffocate and shut up the true light, became themselves the children of darkness, and broke themselves to pieces against the corner stone, and became the scorn of the whole world. And if such endeavours are again set on foot against Christ's faithful witnesses, to shut that door which Christ hath laid open to them; let the experience of the time past towards the Prelatical persons, and others of the same stamp, be a curb unto such undertakers, and an encouragement to all his faithful ones, that they need not fear the reproaches or actings of men against them; for it is Christ that hath opened a door unto them, and no man shall shut it.

For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. These words are no diminution to the praise of the church of *Philadelphia*, for having a little strength; for the sense runs thus, Because though thy strength be but small, and thy gifts be but low in respect of others, yet thou hast well improved those which thou hast, and hast maintained my truth, and hast not denied my name. This manner of speaking is usual among the Hebrews, who put the coupling particle *and*, for the disjunctive

disjunctive thoug^h or yet. This is called little strength, not in opposition of much corruption that reigned in *Philadelphia*; as *Sardis* that had but a few names alive, because the greatest part were dead; but this is called little strength, being apparently no great strength comparatively to what others had, and that God had given her for her talent, which she improving, and putting to profitable uses, according to the parable *Math. 25.* and therefore of all the seven churches this is most commended of God, and in nothing reprobated by him. Hence Note,

Observ. That a small Talent well improved, is followed both by a benediction and a commendation from God himself.

The Parable in *Math. 25.* confirms this, where he that increases his Talent, is made owner of more, and Governor of many Cities. This church of *Philadelphia* bears the name from all her Sisters for her proficiency in the Truths of Christ. Though her strength was not so great, nor her profession and abilities seemed so high as the rest, yet she was more fruitful than the rest; and therefore she surpasses them all, and hath the greatest portion and blessing given her than to any others, and so becomes the only daughter of her mother, the peerless Sister of the seven. Have not of late many low desppicable churches and persons for well improving their small Talents, became fragrant gardens and eminent workmen in God's Vineyard, whiles others of higher profession, parts, and abilities, for want of husbanding their Talents, both lost their Talents, and became barren Delarts; and like unsavoury Salt, fit only to be cast into the Dunghill? Though my years be but few, and my experience small, yet for want of this improvement, I have known great Doctors to become Wittalls in the things of Christ; and on the other hand, children, and babes, by bettering of their Talents, though but of small and of a little strength, and as but a Mustard-seed in the beginning, yet to become sound Doctors in the church of Christ, and at last, to grow up as great Trees in the Vineyard of God, whereunto the Birds of the Ayr may fly for shelter.

Verse

Vers. 9. *Behold I will make them of the Sinagogue of Satan, which call themselves Jews and are not, but do lye: Behold, I say, I will make them that they shall come and worship before thy feet, and they shall know that I have loved thee.*

By this double remarkable Asterism, or twice repeated Note of attention, Behold! In one verse Christ is about to bring to pass some notable worke in his church; and what is it, but to make the perverse Jews that troubled the peace of the churches, in blaspheming the truths of Christ, and endeavouring to bring afflictions and tribulations on the true Professors thereof, but to make them stoop to the Scepter of Christ, and to make them worship him before their feet, to make them one flock and one church, and to make them know that this Christ and this church whom they have vilified, blasphemed and persecuted, to be the only special obje^ct of God's Law, and the only way and means to salvation and eternal life. But to explicate the words more fully,

Behold, I will make them of the Sinagogue of Satan: The words in the Greek copy are οὐδαέτι τοις Συναγογήν τοῦ Σατανᾶ: *Beza's* Version reads them, *Prebebo eos qui sunt ex Synago Satana:* The Verb is in the Present tense I give, and not in the Future; and what is given? *Those that call themselves Jews*; I give, or I yield, is put in the present tense, either for the more certain denotation of the certainty of the good promised to come in the future; (for so the latter clause doth intimate, *I will make them that they shall come and worship*, &c.) Or else, Secondly, it denotes unto us, that God did at that present time make some of the Jews to submit themselves unto his church, as it were, a taste and first fruits, or as a pawn and earnest of their more full, general and universal call and subjection to the Scepter of Jesus Christ, which should ensue in future ages, which the latter clause of this verse is full unto, whereof, more hereafter.

I formerly shewed on cap. 2. ver. 9. how those Jews that are only so by lineage and descent do lye, when they call themselves Jews and are not: To call ones self a Jew in those days when *John* wrote this *Revelation*, was as much as to profess and to arrogate to themselves, that they were the seed of *Jacob*, and had *Abraham* to their Father, and were the *Israel* of God, the only people of God, his peculiar Inheritance, to whom the promises appertained, the children of the Kingdom, to whom the Oracles of God were committed; and all others Aliens and Barbarians in respect of them, who alone had the privileges of the children, a holy Nation, the Lord's Portion, who alone had the Temple, Divine Ordinances, Worship, and clear Visions of God. Now

when those persons that boasted themselves of those priviledges, yet persecuted, reviled and blasphemed Christ and his churches, as they did that of *Smyrna*, cap. 2. 9. They cease to be true Jews, and make a lye, when they call or profess themselves Jews, true Israelites of God, when indeed they are children of the Devil, and of the Sinagogue of Satan; for his works and counsels they do really execute and performe; they do *synagere*, work together, plot, study, and execute one and the same thing; and therefore worthy to be denominated his Disciples, of this infernal Colledg and Synagogue, and not of Christ's church, colledg, or of the Society of Iesus, Hence Note,

Observ. That many are apt to call and boast themselves to be true Jews, true Israelites of God, true Christians, that in truth are not: for their evil works and blasphemies both towards Christ and true Christians, doth evidently shew that they do lye in their Profession, and Indeed are not true inward Jews and Christians, but of the Synagogue of Satan.

You would have thought it strange to hear of a Sinagogue of Satan, an University as it were, for the Devil, set up among the holy people of God, his own Inheritance; and yet it was most true: *John Baptist* could have called them a generation of *Pipers*, and Christ more plainly the *children of the Devil*, for his works they did do, and *John here a Synagogue of Satan*, and that most deservedly, for their contumelious reproaches and oppositions against the Gospel of Christ and true Believers: We have a true counterpane of these carnal Jews among the christian churches in those days, who call themselves Christians and children of the Kingdome, and yet only fit to be cast into utter darkness: They crack of the Temple of God, of Ministry, of Ordinances, of true Visions of God and the truth; and yet who more enemies to the truth and to true godliness? They are just like the Jews of old, that boast of *Abraham* to be their Father, and that they are Israelites as from *Jacob*, and yet are ready with the Jews to crucifie the Lord of life in his Saints and followers.

They think it enough with their elder Brethren the Jews, to have *Abrahams* and *Jacobs* to their Ancestors and Progenitors; but for *Abraham's* faith, or *Jacob's* spirit in wrestling with God, let that alone for them that will: They think it safe enough to be of Israel according to the flesh, to be born in a christian Nation or church, and to have some external badges and priviledges of children, as *Baptisme*, or the like, then all is well, whilst the weightiest things of the Law, and the most substantial parts of Religion, they let ly by and contemn: And what are all their arrogating Titles when truth is wanting, but a kind of blasphemy and a lye? I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not, cap. 2. 9. for indeed he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly in circumcision of the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly

inwardly, whose heart is circumcised, and is one in the spirit *Rom. 2. 28*. There were two sorts of people that did call themselves Jews and were not, but did lye. 1. The Samaritans, 2. They of Iudea and Jerusalem; and both by their perverse carriages to Christ and the truth, did blaspheme and dishonour the honourable name of a Jew: So among christians there are two sorts that wound this honourable name of christians, who call themselves christian churches, and are not, but do wrong and blaspheme the honourable name of church and christians, I mean the Romish Popish Synagogue, and many of the pretended reformed churches: The first like the Jews of old cry out, *The Temple of the Lord! The Temple of the Lord!* O, *The Church! The holy Catholique Church! The Chaire of Peter! The infallible Chair of Peter!* We are the only Spouse of Christ, no salvation without our jurisdiction, and yet who greater blasphemers, reproachers, and persecutors of the true christian churches and Saints then they? And seeing they will not part with the Title of the church, let them keep it; but is such a one as is here mentioned the church or Synagogue of Satan, not of Christ; and as long as their Idolatries continue, she will ever be a *Babel*, not a *Bethel*, counterfeit Jews, no real spiritual ones, christians only in Title and shew, not in truth, notwithstanding all their high pretensions and claimes to the contrary, 2. So many of the pretended reformed christians cry out, *We are of the reformation* we are baptised, we are of the Lutheranes confession, we are of the Calvinists, and yet no Papist more blind, more ignorant, more vile, more profane, or greater enemies to Christ in the power of godliness. The names titles and honour of christians they love, they esteem, they expect; and yet who vainer, who more profane, more ungodly, or less deserve it then they? They are only nominal christians, outward Jews, but to the inward spiritual Jew, who more strangers to it then they: Let them therefore look to it notwithstanding their high and honourable affected titles, least the spirit of God shall declare the very truth, and manifest to all true christians, that they are only seeming Jews, and do lye when they call themselves so, and that they are not of the true christian church, but of the Synagogue of Satan. See more hereon, cap. 2. vers. 9.

Behold I will make them that they shall come and worship before thy feet, and they shall know that I have loved thee. These words contain a promise to the church of *Philadelphia*, that Christ would make those enemies of hers the blaspheming Jews, to come and worship before her feet, that is, would make them to submit to the Scepter of Iesus Christ, and to worship him in the presence of *Philadelphia*, which for her purity and soundnes may pass for a type and figure of the true church of Christ, before whom these carnal formal Jews shall fall low and worship.

Object. But if it be demanded, Whom shall they be made to worship?

Answer. First, God in Christ, whom they have blasphemed and dishonoured, the sole object of Divine worship, which *Philadelphia* and the true church do honour and obey.

Secondly, They shall civilly worship and reverence *Philadelphia*, and the true church, for the honour that Christ hath put upon her, and so will think it an honour indeed to come under the same profession, worship, and discipline with the christian church. And when I have done this, saith Christ, they shall know that I always loved thee, and that thou wert most dear unto me. Now this Prophecy and promise was never fulfilled unto *Philadelphia* in the full extent thereof: only we read of some few of the malignant Jews, given by Christ to the church of *Philadelphia*, and others of that age; but how this promise was fulfilled in the Latitude thereof, it cannot enter into my understanding to comprehend: For when ever did those perverse Jews that for their notorious malignity against Christ and the truth, were justly called the *Synagogue of Satan*, come and worship or bow down before the feet of *Philadelphia*? Or when did they submit to the worship of the churches of Christ, only but in some first fruits, and that before this was written to *Philadelphia*? And when did the Jewish *Sinagogue of Satan*, even to this day ever since, become the true church of Christ more then some few scattering persons that were converted to the faith, inconsiderable to the fulfilling of this promise? Or when did ever God make it eminently appear to them, that the christian churches were the only beloved people and societys in the eye of God, above all others in the world? Seeing thole things were never yet accomplished according to the fulness of this promise, surely there is yet a time to come, when there shall be a more universal call of the Jewish *Synagogue* into holy *Philadelphia* or the christian church, then ever yet have been to this present day. A Note hence will rise,

Observ. That God will not only make the natural obstinate Jews, but also their true counterpanes the nominal seeming Christians, to come and bow before the true Spouse of Christ, before the latter day.

This is confirmed from this verse, wherein it is promised by Christ that the obstinate Jews should come in and worship before the feet of the church of *Philadelphia*; but towards *Philadelphia* in the latter, this was never as yet performed in the extensiveness of this Scripture, as is above manifested, therefore as yet to come to pass before the feet of the true *Philadelphia* the holy church of Christ! And not only the natural Jews shall come in, submit and joy to the holy church of Christ, but all formal birth christians shall also either come in and worship before

fore this true church, or else shall at least wise reverence this true holy church, as the only beloved of Christ, for the glory of the Lamb will be upon her; and the Nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it, and for her greater honour the Kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it, Rev. 21. 23. And it is but just that God's true church and people should have a day too, as well as their adversaries had theirs. We know how that the great and lofty ones of the world, have put all possible reproaches and afflictions on the Saints of God, and churches of the purest judgment; but yet the time is at hand that they shall be convinced, and shall know the Saints to be the only beloved of God, and the great interest and stay of Kingdoms; and then the greatest Monarch will be glad to take hold on the skirt of a Jew to come under the protection of this holy church, for their God is the Lord of Hosts.

Quest. And if any one ask when this shall be?

Answe. When the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved, Rom. 11. When Christ shall appear again for the restoring of his Kingdom, then the Kingdom and Dominion, and the greatness of the Kingdom under the whole Heaven shall be given unto the people of the Saints of the Most High, Dan. 7. 27. then shall all come and worship before *Philadelphia*, the glorious new united christian church, of Jews and Gentiles: And this shall be the true *Sion*, the dwelling place of God's glory, whereunto all Nations shall flock, and worship before it, and become one with it, or otherwise shall be made bow unto the Iron Scepter of Christ, whereby he will make all the Nations of the earth to submit to his Sovereign Authority, and fall and worship before his feet, Rev. 19. 13.

Vers. 10. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

That for which *Philadelphia* is commended for by Christ, is for keeping the word of his patience. This hath either respect to Christ, or unto the church; as if Christ had said, because thou hast kept the word of my patience, that is, the word and doctrine which with a great deal of patience I have taught the world and with a like patience Preached it from time to time; or else the effect being put for the cause, Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, that is, the word of my Gospel, which enjoyneth and worketh patience: Either or both of these senses may aptly be raised and entertained from these words, without any prejudice unto the truth and intention of the Spirit in these words. Or, 2, as respecting the Church of *Philadelphia*: This word as it was the

the word of Christ's patience which he taught patiently, the word is, for many generations; so it was received and kept by her with patience and constancy; for which she had the reward of being kept from the hour of temptation.

Ques. But whither was *Philadelphia* so saved and kept from the hour of temptation, that fell upon all other her Sister churches; that she was so freed that she was not touched by it?

Answ. It is not probable that *Philadelphia* went free when the ten days of persecution under the Emperors *Domitian*, *Trajan*, &c. reach'd the rest of the neighbour Asian churches; but she had her portion also of affliction and tryals, under them ten persecutions: But it seems by the Spirit's expression here; her portion herein was not so large as others had; and therefore as to her, it is called an hour of temptation, a small particle of time respecting the former ten days that went over *Smyrna*, cap. 2. 10.

Ques. How then is it said here that she is kept or saved from this hour of temptation?

Answ. It is as if Christ had said, *I will deliver thee from the hour of temptation*: Now Christ is said to save or deliver from the hour of temptation several manner of ways,

First, That the temptation or tryal should not at all touch them, this was not promised to *Philadelphia*.

Secondly, That though it should come upon them, yet they should not suffer qual under it, but should overcome the temptation or calamity mantully, by receiving strength from Christ to undergo it.

Thirdly, That though they should suffer under this hour of tryal, yet it shall not so reach them as to undo their eternal state and condition; this is sealed, secured, and kept safe by Christ.

Fourthly, They are saved and delivered from this hour of temptation, comparatively as unto others, there is no more laid upon them then they are able to bear, it is but an hour, a taste of affliction, whiles others pass under ten burning days of tryals. In these three latter sensēs *Philadelphia* may be said to be kept safe from the hour of temptation, either from failing under it, or loosing by it in their eternal estate, or comparatively unto others; Hence Note,

Observ. *That though the Saints may suffer in a day of tryal, yet they receive little loss by it, but rather gain and profit.*

It is but for a tryal and refinement of their graces, not for a destruction of them; It is but for an hour, not for an age; and though the common calamity or hour of temptation should so reach them as to deprive them of this life, as often it does; yet know there are saved and delivered from the judgments and evil of the temptation; they are above that, they are eternally marked by

by God, and not one of them shall be lost, but shall be gathered and made up as his Jewels, from out of the Ashes of the world. In the execution of God's judgments, God looks with a distinguishing and considering eye upon all persons that he toucheth therewith; his eye distinguisheth between the precious and the vile, *Psal. 34. 15, 16.* *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and the face of the Lord is against them that do evil;* that when the hour of temptation is coming upon the whole world, Christ is then taking a special care for his, in saving them and sealing them from the evil of that hour: In *Rev. 7. 3.* when Christ sent forth his four destroying Angels, a special charge was in the first place given them, laying, *Hurt not the Earth, neither the Sea, nor the Trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads;* and so they went presently on to the sealing and securing of the servants of God, before they went on with their destroying weapons. compare *Ezek. 9. 4.* *Sec.* hereunto. O the goodness of our God, who hath a special care of us, and eye towards us in the common calamities of the world, who will either preserve us as Israel in a *Goshen*, or as Christ himself was in *Egypt*, whilst the *Herods* of the world doe wrack their cursed malice upon the Infants of *Judea* for Christ's sake: And so our temptation will be but for an hour as respecting others; and if it reaches us further and seizes our persons, and the relations most dear unto us, be assured and know it is but an hour of temptation, and we shall be delivered from it, and become more then conquerors through Christ. Master *Brightman* on this verse (that makes the reformed church according to *Calvine*, the counterpart of this of *Philadelphia*) that the reformed church, asserts, the counterpart, as the type formerly had, is to have an hour of temptation, a more grievous affliction, far above all others, yet a short one, and is to come to pass by the Romish Antichrist in the West, and the Turkish Mahometane in the East; but yet herein the church shall get the victory: And I am thus far of opinion with Master *Brightman*, that before the great Battel of Almighty God and destruction of Antichrist, the true church of Christ shall more eminently and signally be slain and trod under foot by her Antichristian enemies, then at present she is: For this is the day of striving and only of indeavouring to bring forth, and Antichrist still hinders and prevails; for it was given him all the time of his reign to make War with the Saints and to prevail, *Rev. 13. 7.* but before the end of his reign, and about the finishing the Testimony of the faithful witnesses of Christ, the Beast that ascendeth out of the Bottomless Pit, and shall make war against them, and not only overcome them, but kill them, *Rev. 11. 7, 8. &c.* *And their dead bodies shall lie in the streets of the great City for three days and a half,* as the reproach and scorn of all their enemies; and the expectancy of this signall day of affliction over the churches of Christ before the utter overthrow of

of the Antichristian Beast, it far more conduces to the good of the churches of Christ, than an over-hasty expectancy thereof, that every one may be prepared by faith and holiness, and remain unmovable in that day, it being still the usual Method of Christ, after great and signal calamities and afflictions, to come with salvation joy and rest unto the church of God; for he himself by the way of the cross, entered into his glory: Therefore you Saints think it not strange when such an hour of temptation cometh over you, Christ will save and keep you from it, and ye shall be conquerors at the last, and shall reign on earth, Rev. 5. 11. To proceed to the next words,

Which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. This hour of temptation that was to come upon all the world, is not to be understood of all the world indefinitely, but in a limited sense, as that, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son &c.* that is, the world, that Christ died for his holy church and members; for it is evident (whatsoever the Armistice and Universalist saith to the contrary) that by the world here is meant the churches of Christ, dispersed in *Asia* and else where; for Christ never sends a day or hour of tryal on the wicked world for what need he so to do; for they are neither regenerate, nor under grace, and therefore have no graces to make tryal of, either by way of quickning, strengthening, or confirming; for that when Christ promises to *Philadelphia* that he will keep her from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth, is no more in effect, but as if Christ had said, I will keep thee from the hurt and danger of the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the christian churches in the world, for the tryal of their faith and constancy in all the quarters of the earth. Hence Note,

Observe That not any of Christ's churches are exempted from tryals and temptations:

And the great reason of this is, that the church most thrives and grows this way; it is observed a Lily among Thorns grows fairest and largest; and it was anciently laid, that the blood of the Martyrs was the seed-plot of the church; the more times that gold is refined by the Refiners fire, the more ductible and solid it becomes: So Christ's churches, the more tryals they go under, the more eminent and resplendent they become in grace: In the day of affliction under Bishops and Prelates, more true godliness did appear, then at present, in the day of prosperity and peace. A beloved child never scapes without a rod from his Father when he offends; neither a true church from Gods fatherly tryals and chastisements; for in somethings we offend all, and the best hath their *macule*, their spots, dross, and defections, to be purged from, therefore not strange when we fall into diverse tryals; by this we know that we are not bastards, but

but sons beloved of God, *Heb. 12.* And all things shall work together for good to those that fear God.

Observe. 2. Another Note hence is, That the greatest hour of calamity and temptation that comes upon the world, is but a tryal unto the godly.

Temptations unto the wicked are God's Judgments towards them, they are the executioners of his wrath and justice; He destroys the wicked in his fiery indignation: But unto the godly they are only for their tryal, strengthening, and bettering. To one God gives riches, honour, preferment, &c., as a mercy; to the other they become snares unto, and destructive. So also on the godly, as on *Job*, God sends the plundering Sabaeans, as a tryal of their patience; on the other, as the executioners of his wrath: Sword, famine, or death, that equally sweeps away both, yet unto the one, they are but the instruments, gate, or door to a higher glory; yet unto the others, an entrance unto final judgments. Therefore Saints think it neither no los when temptations seize upon them, they become more weighty, more solid, more sound, more sincere, more experimental, more gracious, and at last more glorious thereby: and on this ground, how little are they troubled when all the world is on fire, and in combustion about their ears; when many do call for the mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the fiery indignation that is passing over, yet they are placide, serene, and in a Halcyon condition, all is peace with them, though all the world is fire about them, being so far above the world.

Vers. 11. Behold I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Christ tells *Philadelphia*, that he is about a remarkable and notable work; and it is, *Behold I come quickly.* This is not to be understood of Christ's second coming to judgment, nor of his spiritual coming, but of his coming with the hour of temptation and tryal upon his churches; this is somewhat agreeable unto that expression of Christ to the church of *Ephesus*, cap. 2. 5. *Else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy Candlestick, &c.* So Christ tells the church of *Philadelphia*, with a *Behold* to usher it in, *I come quickly:* what to do? But with that hour of temptation, upon all the world, to try all that dwell upon the earth: which hapned and fell out prelently after this Vision was given unto *John*, in the time of *Trajan* the Emperour, who succeeded *Domitian*, in whose days this Revelation was given to *John* at *Patmos*; and in the days of *Trajan* his successor, this hour of temptation, tryal, affliction, and persecution seized upon all the churches of Christ in *Asia*, and else-where. Therefore he is exhorted to hold fast what he had received, and that is, the word of Christ, and his patience,

patience, which she had formerly received and kept, and that she is now again exhorted to hold fast, maintain, and persevere in, when that hour of temptation cometh on all them that dwell upon the earth. Hence Note,

Observ. That the consideration of Christ's speedy coming with times of tryals upon his churches, is a special motive to persevere with constancy in the profession of Christ and his truth.

If we knew that judgement was so neer at the door, it would make us to trim up our lamps, to have them furnished with the oyl of faith, and light of good works, that we may be able to stand in the day of tryal. No greater motive to set an edge upon our graces, then to know that Christ is near with times of tryals. If we knew the good man of the house would return this present day, we would have all things garnished to bid him welcome *Hold fast*, for I come quickly; or else, as in the next words, you will losse your honour, and your crown.

Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. As if Christ had said to the church of Philadelphia, Thou hast hitherto kept the word of my patience, kept close unto my Gospel, go on courageously in that course which thou hast begun, hold fast, and persevere therein, lest if thou fail in thy course, another come and take away thy crown and reward.

Here lies a difficulty, what is meant by this crown.

Some would have it eternal life, which is the crown of our faithful adhering to Christ and his doctrine; but I cannot adhere to this opinion: for this crown can never be taken away from the faithful; for though many that are only externally called, may be said for non-persevering, to lose their crown which they once hoped for, and indeed, they never had true right and title to it, but only in their outward seeming call, and in the book of the visible church, but not of God's election and predetermined, as formerly more at large is manifested verse 5. on the book of life; Therefore surely this crown which may be taken away from the faithful, and given to another; for inconstancy or non-perseverance in the truth, is that honour and reward which was promised Philadelphia in verse 9. preceding: That all her enemies should fall low before her, and worship before her feet: which kind of crown and reward indeed may be taken away from the faithful for their looseness, slothfulness, or remissness in duties of godliness, to which they are often promised and annexed, and for want thereof, are often removed and given to a more proficient and worthy people. So you see what is this crown that may be taken away from the faithful for their remissness and inconstancy in the truth, to wit, the honour and reverence which their sincere profession acquired from the churches, and all persons round about them. Hence Note,

Observ.

Observ. That those churches that hold fast the truths of Christ with most constancy and courage in the times of tryal, become the most honourable and worthy of a crown, of any people in the world.

Who but Philadelphia was worthy that the obstinate Jews, enemies unto the truth, should come, and bow, and worship before her? She kept close to the word of Christ's patience, therefore none shall take away her crown; her honour shall still remain among the churches, as long as any churches shall endure. If we tread in the steps of faithful Philadelphia, and hold fast, and go on manfully in the profession of the faith, God will make the formal Jews of our times, the high pretending catholique churchmen, to bow and worship before our feet: Is not our name, I mean the name of *England*, grown honourable among the Nations, their friends abroad, and terrible unto their enemies? And how comes this to pass, but by means of the faithful in the land, that held fast and maintained with courage and constancy the word of Christ's patience among us, in an hour of temptation and tryal, when the Prelatical fire of persecutions were on foot? If we hold fast to Christ, and persist in his truth and doctrine, none shall be able to take away our crown; but if we flag in our duties to him, our crown will be the less, and our honour will soon flag also. When Israel kept close to God, and reformed up unto his holy pattern in the Mount, God made them famous among the Nations, and a burdensome stone to all that meddled with them: but when they departed from God by their evil and abominable courses, God gave them up into the hands of their enemies, and led them into the Land of captivity: and since for their obstinacy in iniquity, they have quite lost their crown, and become a dispersed people, and a reproach among all Nations where they live. And this is according to that good advice given by godly *David*, as his last Legacy to his wise son *Solomon*, in *1 Chron. 28.9.* which is applicable to every faithful soul: *And thou Solomon my son, Know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts; If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*

Verse 12. *Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the Temple of my God, and he shall go no more out : And I will write upon him the Name of my God, and the Name of the City of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God : And I will write upon him my new Name.*

In the Greek, ὁ νικῶν ἢ οὐκ ἡταν ὁ νικῶν. The Nominative case is put absolutely by a defect of a Preposition, *to, of, or for*, which is an Hebraisme; the words are thus to be read: *As for him that overcometh, I will make a pillar, &c.* Agreeable to this are those places, Rom. 8. 3. *For what was impossible to the Law, by an Hebraism ought to be read, as for, or touching the impossibility of the Law;* and Psalm 18. 30. *Jehovah, his way is perfect, which we read, The way of God, or, As for God, his way is perfect.* The same reading is in Rev. cap. 2. 26.

The reward of him that overcometh is double, 1. I will make him a Pillar in the Temple of my God, and he shall go no more out. 1, 2. Christ sets upon him a threefold Name, The Name of his God, The Name of New Jerusalem, and His own new Name.

This allusion of a Pillar is taken up by the Spirit, from those two Brazen Pillars in Solomon's Temple, which was a Type of the true Temple and church of Christ, and so nothing was made or placed therein in vain, though they seemed small, but did typifie and signify somewhat to us. Solomon called his two pillars which he erected, by two remarkable Names, *as Kings. 7. 21.* The right Pillar by the name of *Phaess*, and the left by the name of *Beaaz*. The one signifying *He shall establish*, and the other, *In it there is strength*. So in the Antitype, those overcoming Saints, that Christ makes Pillars in the Temple of his God, have these two qualities or properties put upon them, establishment and perpetuity, both in their spiritual strength and graces, and also in their new church state which cometh down from heaven: and lest any should think that those new Pillars of the Temple of God might fail, as those of Solomon's did, when they were broken, and the brass thereof carried away by *Nebuchadnezzar* into *Babel* *Jer. 52. 17.* there is another additional property put upon them then that of perpetuity and strength, even of eternity, in those words, *And he shall go no more out.* After the conquering Saints are taken into this holy Temple, there is no fear of being turned out of possession of it; no *Nebuchadnezzar* shall ever come and break them in pieces, or carry them by force into captivity. The *Nebuchadnezzars* of the world have always hitherto under several forms of Beasts and Governments, carried away, and broken to pieces the weak and infirm pillars of the visible church; for indeed they were given into their hands by God to be overcomed

and trodden under foot by them, *Rev. 11.* but having at last over-comm'd by suffering and patience, Christ will raise them up again, to become Pillars in his New Temple, that shall never go out any more, and will make them othergates persons then ever formerly they were; for he will write upon them the name of his God: and what is that? *Fehovah Shaddai, The Lord, the mighty God;* and the name of the new *Jersusalem* which cometh down from heaven, and his own new Name, *Phil. 2, 9.* All intimating their glorious state and dignity that Christ will put them in possession of in that new church-state which is promised them before the ultimate day of judgement, which shall never perish, nor any more be taken from them. But on this more hereafter.

From the words, *I will make him a pillar in the Temple of my God,*
Note,

Note,
Observ. The over-coming Saints of Christ, shall be made most honourable in the New Jerusalem, the new Temple of God, the new Church-state that Christ will restore on earth, before the end of all, prophesied of Rev. 21.1, &c.

They are made pillars, and pillars in the church are honourable; *James* and *John* are called pillars, great eminent Apostles, and those were placed in the porch of *Solomon's* Temple, for the great ornament and glory thereof: *They sit on Thrones, judging the Nations round about: They are made Kings and Priests unto their God:* And what more honourable then those high callings to the eye of men, of Kings, Priests, and Judges? Yea, the name of God, of Christ; and the new Jerusalem is written upon them, and therefore sure most honourable. Little do the high ones of this present generation, with their counterfeit and mock-honour, think that the now poor despicable Saints of Christ, whom they so much scorn and trample under-foot, are those for whose sakes the world is preserved from flaming fires, and that one day shall become the only Kings, Rulers, and Princes thereof, maugre all the malice of Satan, and all their antichristian enemies in the world to the contrary. If the great and honourable persons of the world did but verily believe that the Saints of Christ should one day become so honourable in the presence of the whole world, they would more esteem them then they do, as Heirs, born unto so great a Kingdom. It is the common, and not unwise practise of politique courtiers, when their old Sovereign or Prince is upon declining, they adore and worship the next Heir, or reputed Successor, as the rising Sun, as the nearest step to their pretermets. And will ye not be so wise ye sons of men, to make good your interest with the rising Heirs, and children of this great ensuing Monarch? Three of the great Monarchs of the world are dead, and we have seen their graves, the fourth is sick with age, if not even at deaths door, having one foot in his grave already, for his weakness and infirmity being but as an Image of

the first Beast, or of himself, when he was in his youth, under his *Cesarian Heads and Empire*: And the fifth is drawing nigh, having already poured out many Vials of ruine upon the fourth, to make way for the appearance of himself, this heavenly one. And think ye, is it not good and honest policy to come under the skirts of the ~~carriers~~ of this great and heavenly Prince, to become one in faith, manners, discipline, and interest with them, that when he appeareth, ye may joyntly reigne with him and them in his new and heavenly Kingdom? It will be the first step unto honour and your rising, to become one in interest with the now despicable and vilified Saints of Christ; for though at present they differ nothing from servants, yet know they will be one day heirs of all.

Obstry. 2. *That Christ's new restored Church-state, new Temple, new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven, shall never perish, but be established for ever.*

Though some would have these words, *to be made pillars in the Temple of God, and to go out no more*, to signifie the stability of the faith of the elect, wherunto I cannot wholly assent; for though I grant, that the faithful (as *Philadelphia*) are made pillars for their stability in the faith and strength of grace in the Temple of God, and their faith is so confirmed to them, that they never need to fear of utter failing or perishing; yet there is more promised in this verse, then a meer confirmation of the elect from non-falling away; for the next coherent words do connote so much: when Christ promises to write the name of the new Jerusalem, and the new name of Christ upon them, *to be made pillars in the faith, and to be established therein*, was always a continued promise, and always performed to the church in all ages: but the name of the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven, and the new name of Christ, which are annexed hereunto, were never yet made good unto the church, but hath reference unto a more glorious future church-state on earth, spoken of *Rev. 21. 1*, *I saw a new heaven, and a new earth*; which in vers. 10. is called *the great City, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God*, which on the subsequent words of this verse, shall more evidently be explained. But to return. This new church-state, new Temple, is to continue to perpetuity, yea for everlasting; they that enter thereinto, are made firm as pillars, not to be removed; they that enter into the gates of the present visible Temple, may again be removed, ejected, and lose their station, for being not rooted in the faith, yea, and the Temple it self, as those seven Asian Temples, removed, overthrown, and extirpated for their iniquities. But they that enter into this holy new Temple that comes down from heaven, they are made pillars therein, and shall never go forth more, until Christ lays down his Kingdom unto the Father, and God shall be all in all. Not as some vainly

vainly object against the expectant tryumphing Saints, That they shall reign for the term of a thousand years, and then their kingdom shall cease: But the truth is, that when *Gog and Magog* shall be destroyed, and all Christ's open enemies cast into the bottomless Lake of fire, about the end of the Saints tryumphant thousand years, *Rev. 20. 10*, then that Kingdom which Christ during all that former happy millenary ruled and reigned in as Mediator and God-man, which properly is called his Throne and his Kingdom, shall be devolved and swallowed up by a more glorious Kingdom, and the Saints translated in the highest heavenly glory, which for the most excellent and God-like properties therof, is called in *1 Cor. 15. 24*, *The Kingdom of God, even the Father*; and wherein all Ordinances shall cease; for *John* in *Rev. 21. 22*, saith, *And I saw no Temple therein, for the Lord God almighty, and the Lamb are the Temple of it*: and in chap. 22. v. 5. describing further this glorious state, he saith, *And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun* (that is, those ordinances, or the like thereto we now enjoy) *for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reigne forever and ever*. They do therefore vainly cavil that say, That Christ shall utterly and altogether cease to reigne in his Headship over his church tryumphant, from that of *1 Cor. 15. 24*, where it is said, *When he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all Rule, and all Authority and power*: And in v. 28, *And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all*. Now the Apostles meaning was not, that Christ should cease to be Head of his church, and so ever, or at any time, to cease to rule over them, as the members of his body mystical, whereof he himself is Head: but when all his enemies are put under his feet, and all Rules, Powers, and Authorities in the world, are by him utterly vanquished and put down, and when the last enemy (death) shall be destroyed, and death and hell cast into the Lake of fire, *Rev. 20. 14*, after the general and last judgment of the dead; then I say, Christ shall deliver up to God, even the Father, his former Mediatory and Judiciary Kingdom, whereby he ruled and reigned, not only over his holy faithful ones, by his Laws and ordinances, but also over all the Nations and Kingdoms of the earth by his rod of Iron during the thousand years: and this is that which is called Christ's own special Throne, *Rev. 3. 21*, and Christ's own Kingdom, which he hath purchased and merited by his death; which Kingdom, after the destruction of the new raised enemies of the church miraculously by fire from heaven, in the Gogian war, at that time when they encompassed the Saints of the most High, and the beloved City, about the finishing of their millenary Imperial reigne on earth, I say, that that Kingdom shall then expire, and be delivered up by

by Christ unto God, even the Father. But in the Fathers kingdom, both Christ and them shall reign for ever and ever, *Rev. 22. 5.* And observe, that Christ's kingdom, and the Father's, are *diversa*, but not *contraria*; or rather, that Christ's kingdom is but the morning prelude, prodromus, or first part of that everlasting one of God, even the Father: Christ's millenary kingdom was for Ruling, Judging, and Reigning over the obstinate enemies of his, until all (by his rod of Iron) are brought subject to him, and destroyed, that opposed him; and so shall have an end when that work is done, and delivered up unto God, even the Father; whereupon begins that heavenly one of the Father's, wherein the Son himself shall be also subject unto him, that put all things under him, *1 Cor. 15. 28.* so that thereby there will be no loss to the Saints in the expiration of this of Christ's Mediatorial and Judicial kingdom, when they are translated into a more glorious and heavenly Kingdom, and City, whose Builder is God, and wherein there shall be no more curse, but the Throne of God, and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him, *Rev. 22. 3.* The greatest work in this New Jerusalem, is praise and Hallelujahs to the most high and beautiful Vision, as it is in the fourth verse; and they shall see his face, and his Name shall be in their foreheads, all tears, sorrow, and the curse shall be quite wiped off in this new heaven-like state of the Father's Kingdom, which were not from all persons in the former of the Son's happy millenary Kingdom, for though Satan was bound therein, that none was found to hurt in all that holy mountain, or that happy Kingdom, yet still subject under it there remains the Nations of the four quarters of the world, during the whole term of that holy Imperial reign; or else, whom had the Saints to reign over and govern, during that time? And otherwise, How possibly could they convene as the sands of the Sea-shore, to make war against the holy city under *Gog* and *Magog*, cap. 20. 8. by the instigation of Satan let loose among them? And if those Nations shall still remain (as evident they shall) during the Saints dominion and Empire, doubtless though Satan and they shall be restrained from opposing the peace and quiet of the Saints in their Reign and Kingdom, yet they shall not be so restrained, as to be void of corruptions, sins, and impieties among themselves, which therefore are not void of the curse, as respecting themselves, nor consequently of tears and sorrow, and death, the most due wages of sin. Neither shall I ever think it reasonable to conceive, that *Gog* and *Magog*, and their numberless followers in that war against the camp of the Saints, and the beloved City, were all innocent sinless creatures all the time of the Saints Imperial reign over them, for doubtless they had sins enough, and wicked dispositions sufficient within, or else they would not be so ready unto the entertainment of Satan's delusions, and promoting his designs

designs against their Lords and Rulers, the holy Saints of Christ, towards the latter end of their Reigne, and in casting off their bonds, if possibly they could. In short, I conceive, Satan and they, during the Saints Imperial Reigne, to be bound up from open opposing, hurting, or violating the peace, comfort, or interest of the Saints; but not so, as Satan should not tempt the Nations subject unto the Saints, that they thereby should be free from sin, which will be alone the privilege and prerogative only of the reigning Saints; and therefore I am of opinion, that the Saints thousand years Empire, is but the beginning and first fruits of their happy new church-state and heavenly city, that comes down from God, and is transitory, and shall pass away, after all things are made subject unto Christ: But another more glorious shall immediately succeed in the room thereof, which is from God even the Father, and is everlasting; and this city had no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof, *Rev. 21. 23.* and to conclude this, I am of the minde notwithstanding, That Christ's Kingdom and the Father's, do only differ in the administration, and in the equality of glory, but not in glory it self: both are sinless, both sorrowless, both deathless, both glorious; but herein they differ, That that of the Sons is a Kingdom of Justice and judgement, which shall have an end; and therefore less glorious than that of the Father's, though in it self most glorious; but that of God the Father's, is a Kingdom of praises and Hallelujahs to the most High, endless and everlasting.

Grant O God, that thy poor servant may be kept faithful unto thee, and become a true Philadelphian, overcoming his temptations in this life; that he may be made at last a pillar in thy New Temple, a partaker in the great hopes of the Saints in the Kingdom of the Son, and of God, even the Father, *Amen.*

And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the City of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down from heaven from my God, and I will write upon him my new Name.

There is a threefold name to be written on the conquering Saints of Philadelphia, of God, of the new Jerusalem, and the new Name of the Son. This name shall be set upon the overcoming Saints, to denote whose they are, as the followers of the Beast and Antichrist have the mark of Antichrist and the Beast upon them, *Rev. 13.* that they may be known and manifest, so God's peculiar chosen ones have also his mark upon them; to declare forth unto others whose they are. And this name herein promised, is not the ordinary name of God that the Saints bear this present time, of holy, godly, or the like; for this is to be written on in the future, that all may see it without hesitating or doubting that they are God's, in that time when that new Jerusalem comes down from heaven. The Saints had always, and N n

all times the name of God and Christ upon them, being called godly christians, &c. But here is a new name of Christ and God to be written on them, which formerly they were unacquainted with : and what is that name of God but *El-Shaddai*, God of power and strength, that shall be set upon them ? And when will it be, but in that day when the new Jerusalem comes down from God out of heaven ? *Rev. 21. 2.* Then the weakest Saint shall be as *David*, and the house of *David* as *Elobim*, *Zach. 12.*

2. The second name that is put upon them, is that of the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven : They shall not only visibly appear to have God's name and nature upon them, but they shall also visibly appear to be citizens of that new Jerusalem that comes down from God ; and if it comes down from God, and from heaven, then surely it is meant of an estate here on earth, and not in the supernal heavens, as many dream of concerning this place, and that of *Rev. 21. 2.* That Jerusalem which is above, and is celestial, that abides, and is fixed, and shall not descend nor come down, but this Jerusalem is to come down, and to be with men, *Rev. 21. 3.* and God will dwell with them ; it were but a superfluous promise, for God to tell the blessed in heaven, he would dwell with them there, that was beyond all doubt, and therefore it must be here meant, That the Tabernacle of God is with men, when Christ comes before the last day, to the great restauration of his church on earth : And this new city and church-state is called by Christ, *The City of my God*, because God is the builder of it ; and it is said to come down from heaven, and from God, because the rise and dignity thereof shall be so great and wonderful, that all shall acknowledge the power of God in the erecting thereof, and that his hand did wholly rear it, for God will have all the glory of it.

3. Christ will write his own new Name upon them ; and what is that but that name mentioned in *Rev. 19. 16.* *King of kings, and Lord of lords*, and this corresponds with that name, in *Phil. 2. 9.* which God had given Christ, *which is above every name, at which name every knee should bow, of things in heaven, things in earth, and things under the earth*, and in *Heb. 2. 8.* *Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet* : But now we see not yet all things put under him : Surely Christ as yet had never this new name put upon him, though he is exalted above the heavens into glory : But we see not yet all things put in subjection under his feet, nor yet every knee on earth to bow unto him, or to worship him ; five parts in six of the world being Pagans or Mahometans, that do not so much as take notice of him, therefore sure not bow unto him ; and among professed christians, how few do sincerely bow unto him, all the godly know. Neither as yet hath that new name of King of Kings, and Lord of lords been put upon him as Mediator and God-man ; I grant, that by virtue of his death and mediation

mediation, all Kings in the world reign, and decree justice ; and as God, he is the supreme Lord, and King of kings : But this is not all, he must as Man, be King of kings, and Lord of lords, and he must rule and reign in another mode and posture than ever hitherto he hath done : We have known him hitherto only as a Lamb, and as a man of sorrows, ruling by his spiritual Laws and Ordinances in and over his Saints only, but we shall know him yet again with another new name written on him, that no man knew but himself, with his head crowned with many crowns, and out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, *Rev. 19. 12. 15.* The *Nimrods* of the world have hitherto reigned and trodden under-foot the holy city of God, and Christ hath been hitherto King of the Jews in Title only ; when Christ came first in the flesh, he was only King of the Jews *in jure*, in right, and in God's purpose and decrees, but never in possession, and *in esse*. Christ in his first coming was as an heir, under years, in the form of a servant, though Lord of all, which will be completely manifested at the accomplishment of his full age, at his second coming, he was promised and prophesied to be King of the Jews, and so acknowledged, not only by the three Wise men that offered to him in his swadling cloths, Gold, Myrrhe, and Frankincense, but by himself also, and by that inscription on his cross, though ironically set thereon by *Pilate* and the Jews, yet by divine ordination it was written, *Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews*. And this Kingly power of his shall one day be manifested, when he will arise, and take the iron Scepter of power and force in his hand, to destroy all his enemies, and opposers of his kingdom : He then will make it appear, that he was he that was born King of the Jews, and then will become King of Kings, and Lord of lords. And this new name of his, he will write upon his faithful followers : As he shall reign and triumph over all the powers of the world, so they shall be compartners and sharers with him in the honour and glory of this Kingdom, they shall be taken into the fellowship of this glory, and shall sit with him on his Throne, as Kings, judging the nations of the world, *Rev. 3. 12. 1.* From the words Note,

Observe. That God will make his Church most glorious and triumphant here on earth, before the end of all.

He will put his own name upon her, she shall be God-like in power, strength, and glory, she shall have the name of the new Jerusalem that cometh down from God written on her, that for her strength and glory is described in *Rev. 21.* *To have her walls and gates strong and high, and of precious stones, built on the foundation of the twelve Apostles, and the new name of Christ set upon her* : As Christ shall be then King of kings, so she shall be the Queen-city of the world : *Rome, or Babylon, shall be no longer the Empire*

pres of the Universe, she shall lye in dust and ashes, and become the habitation of Owls and Satyrs; whilst this new Jerusalem, or new church-state, shall become the great city of the living God, wherein his glory and light shall more eminently appear, then in any other Society ever hitherto in the world. All other Monarchies were but partial in respect of this: *Nebuchadnezzar's* and the Persians reached but part of *Asia*. *Alexander's* but a little further then theirs. The Roman *Cesars*, though farther in the West then the former, yet not so extensive in the East as theirs. The *Spanish*, *Mahometan*, *Turkish*, *Persian*, *Tartarian*, and the rest of the Monarchies that are now a foot in the world, the several branches, heads, or horns of the latter, former, Roman Beast, are but small in respect of this universal Monarchy the church shall enjoy before the end of the world here on earth: This mountain shall be set on the top of all other mountains: Christ and his Saints shall be the universal Monarchy in the world: He and they shall rule the Nations, not one of them, but all of them, with a rod of iron; which never as yet was fulfilled, but rather the contrary, and therefore to be expected in its due time and season.

Quest. But the great question and doubt is, whether this Triumphant state of the church shall be here on earth, or in the supernal heavens, as some would have it.

Ans^w. I answer, The new Jerusalem, or new church-state, is to come down from God out of heaven, as aforesaid, and therefore sure not in heaven.

Secondly, It is a new heaven, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, according to *2 Pet. 3. 13.* now righteousness or justice is properly in earth among living Saints, and is given unto them as an additional promise of future happiness: in heaven above there was no fear to miss it, or needed any promise for the confirmation of it.

Thirdly, In this new State Christ shall rule the Nations with a rod of iron; now surely 'tis well known there are no Nations in heaven to be ruled with a rod of iron, and therefore it must be on earth.

Fourthly, This new city was measured by the Angel, *Rev. 21. 17.* and it was found according to the measure of man, that is of the Angel, one hundred forty and four cubits: and how this finite measure can suit with the infiniteness and immeasurableness of the supernal heavens, let the wise consider: therefore surely it must be meant of an estate on earth.

Fifthly, In verse 24. it is said, *That the Kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it*; now this cannot be said of the supernal heavens, for they can bring no addition unto that.

6: To this new state there is promised, *That God will wipe off all sorrow and tears, and that there shall be no night there.* Now this were superfluous to be promised and added to the supernal heaven, the habitation

habitation of Gods glory, and therefore it must be fulfilled to a new church state here on earth.

Seventhly and lastly, How unreasonable would it be to describe the invisible heavens above, with rivers, with streets, and with trees therein, suitable only to an estate here on earth, as this is in *Rev. 22. 1, 2.* And this is that *Jerusalem* which is above, that *Paul* speaks of, *Gal. 4. 26.* which is the mother of us all; it is called heavenly, and from above, because of its divine original, and of its right of inheritance; and it is said to descend, or come down from God, because God's singular power and mercy shall gloriously appear in building this new city: And this new heaven or heavenly church state, shall be on earth, according to *Rev. 21. 1.* and understand that *subordinata non sunt contraria.* There may be a heaven on earth, and yet a heaven above; there may be a church triumphant on earth, and yet in heaven also: And therefore to close with that of *Rev. 5. 11.* which is very downright and positive for the earth to be the place of the Saints triumphant reign: And we shall reign on earth.

Quest. But another question may be made, whether this Imperial reign of the Saints, shall be after the general resurrection and judgment, or before.

Ans^w. I answer, after the particular resurrection of the Saints, and before the ultimate end of the judgment of the Nations and wicked of the world, the Saints shall first arise and come with Christ, and meet him in the clouds; and be joyned to the Saints that are then alive, which at the sounding of Christ's trump, and in a moment, shall be changed, and made immortal, as their brethren, the raised ones are, and they shall reign a thousand years, and over whom? but over the unbelieving Nations of the world. And this is Christ's great day of judgment, and the day of his reign, wherein himself with his Saints and members do reign over, and judge the wicked of the world, wherein a thousand years is but as one day with God; and this he does before the ultimate act of all, for towards the evening of this great day, God suffers Satan to gather together all the wicked of the world, as the sand of the Sea shore, under the conduct of *Gog and Magog*, to endeavour the ruine of these immortal Saints, if it were possible, *Rev. 20. 8, 9.* but they are all taken in that enterprize, with their leader Satan, and cast into the lake of everlasting fire, and presently thereon follows the general resurrection and judgement of all, and all that were not found written in the book of life, were cast into that lake of fire, which is the second death. And I would willingly demand of all that are contrary minded, to what end should this new Jerusalem come down from heaven after the general judgement, or after the ultimate end of all, when all the elect Saints of God shall be translated into heaven, into the Kingdom of God, even the Father? They that should conceive that the

the new Jerusalem, or church state should descend unto the earth after all the Saints are carryed by Christ unto his long before prepared mansion, even into that heavenly place where himself shall be, and so we also shall be for ever with the Lord, *1 Thes. 4. 17: John 17. 24.* I should judge them to want some Hellebore, or rather, true light from above, to enlighten their dark understandings in this particular: and therefore sure the time of the Saints triumphant reigne, is to be here on earth, before the ultimate end, and general judgement of all the world.

From the words, *Which shall come down from heaven from my God, Observe,*

Obser. 2. That that glorious new Church-state that the Saints shall enjoy, or otherwise, That the Saints Imperial reigne, shall be most eminently conspicuous, and openly known and acknowledged by all the Nations of the world.

Now the great question is, Who are the true church, or the only Saints in the world?

This question then will be cleared, and put out of doubt, and not till then wholly, but in part, according to the several measures of outward tokens and characters, which may be counterfeit and hypocritical; but then there shall be no deceit, no hypocrisy shall lye hid; the name of God will be writ upon them, and of the new Jerusalem, and of the Son of God, and it will be so eminently obvious to all beholders, and so plainly demonstrated in the operations and effects thereof, as if the very name had been written in their foreheads: and surely it must needs be so, for this new city comes down from God, he being the builder of it, and *John* law (by a prophetical Vision) this new City coming down from God out of heaven, *Rev. 20. 2.* And if it were already come down from God, as some of those days do vainly dream of, it would surely be known and acknowledged both by the godly and ungodly also; by the godly, as being the especial workmanship of his own hand only, in which their souls would delight: Neither can they be ignorant thereof, being to be sharers and compartners in that Kingdom, though differing from one another in judgements and opinions: the weak christian shall be a partner therein as well as the strong, and therefore all of this sort must needs know it, if it were come down from heaven on earth already.

2. In the next place, the wicked and ungodly of the world must needs then take notice of it also; for, there is written thereon the name of God, of new Jerusalem, and the new name of the same, all signifying power, strength, and glory, which they must needs be sensible of, and feel the effects thereof unto their pain, if the time were at hand that they should rule and break them as a Potters vessel, as in *cap. 2. v. 27.* with a rod of iron. That Kingdom that comes down from heaven from God, shall surely be

be seen and acknowledged of all, and especially coming with the power and glory, as the day of the Saints triumphant reigne does bring ethred in with the most glorious appearing of the morning star: Christ in the clouds, with myriads of his Angels, and rained Saints, that none can possibly be ignorant of it: Therefore that I may deal plainly with those that would have the Saints to reigne before their Leader, Head, and King appears, 'tis much to be doubted, that their spirits are not right with their master's spirit, who was meek, peaceable, ready to suffer under the powers of the world, not drawing the sword to free or revenge himself, or his followers, but checked *Peter* for it, when he attempted it on *Mischas* and the rest that laid hands upon him. Christ well knew that his Kingdom was not of this world, of this age of sin and corruption, and therefore his way was not to enter upon it by swords and blood, but by suffering and patience, and so entered into his glory: and they that go another way, may build a city, but not such a one as comes down from God out of heaven, whose builder is God: they may erect a city, whose builder is man, and on whose gates and walls are written their own names, not of God, or of Christ's, nor of the new Jerusalem: they may build a *Babel*, not a *Bethel*, a Kingdom wherein the Beast may reign in, not Christ and his Saints, a Kingdom of weakness and imperfection, whereby they themselves, and all that trust thereto, may be justly involved into utter ruine and misery, for trusting to the weak arm of flesh, and leaving off their hopes in the living God, and of that everlasting new city, promised to the conquering, suffering, patient Saints, and not to the heady, rebellious, or precipitant ones of the earth: and whereon the name of God, of the new Jerusalem, and the new name of Christ is written and inscribed, so plain and so evident, that he that runneth may read it, and say at the time when it descends, that this is the Spouse, the Lamb's wife, the great city, the holy Jerusalem, that came down from God, which shall be so univeral and conspicuous for light and glory, that all Nations of the earth that are saved, shall walk in the light thereof, and bring their glory to it; and this city had no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof, *Rev. 21. 23.*

Vers. 13. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

If it be demanded why these words are so often inculcated at the end of each particular Epistle to the several churches?

I answer, What was written to them, was not only peculiarly relating unto themselves, but unto all others to take notice of also unto the ends of the world, coming under the same conditions with

with themselves; according to that of *Paul*, Rom. 15. 4. *It was not only written for them, but for our instruction also*: And therefore let the wise christian consider what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Ver. 14. *And unto the Angel of the church of the Laodiceans, write these things, saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.*

The seventh and last of Christ's monitory Epistles, is written to the chief Minister or Pastor of the church of the Laodiceans, which was *Archippus*, as some say, mentioned Coloff. 4. 17. not far from *Philadelphia*, in the lesser *Asia*. It was called *Laodicea*, from *Laodice*, wife of *Antiochus*, who built it in honour of his wife, and called it according to her name, *Laodicea*; which name in the Greek signifies as much as *Commandress, Princess, or Diatrix of the people*.

The nature and disposition of this church was somewhat agreeable to the nature of her name: She conceived her self to be a glorious church, a Princess amongst the rest of her Sister churches, for so in ver. 17. she vaunts her self to be rich, to be increased with goods, and to want nothing: But when the Spirit of Christ brought her to the tryal, she was found wretched, miserable, poor, blinde, and naked. Hence by the way Note,

Observ. *That God does often in his providence ordain names to persons and places, suitable and well comporting with their natural dispositions and qualities.*

Christ was called *Jesus*, because he was the Saviour of the world: *Joshua* had a name also from the same root, he being also a temporal Saviour unto *Israel*, leading them into the land of *Canaan*, saving and delivering them from the hands and fury of the *Canaanites*, the ancient inhabitants of the holy Land. Many examples are found of the like kinde, as *John*, whose name and nature both were gracious: *Chrysostome* he was an eloquent golden mouthed Father, and he had a name suitable to his nature. Many more of the like kinde will offer themselves to the obseruant eye, but these shall suffice.

2. For places and churches, *Rome* was called *Roma*, from *Romulus*, from some old word of the like sound, which signifies strength. *Babylon*, from *Babel*, confusion. *Philadelphia* had a beloved name, and she was a beloved church. *Laodicea* had a vain-glorious name, and she was a vain-glorious church, much boasting of her spiritual riches, whiles miserable, poor, and naked.

These things saith the Amen, &c.]

Christ is here described under a threefold property, 1. As the *Amen*. 2. As the *faithful and true witness*. 3. As the *beginning of the creation of God*. These three properties are taken out of the

the general description of Christ in the preliminary Epistle to the seven churches in the first chapter.

First he is called the *Amen*, out of the eighteenth verse of the first chapter, to denote unto us,

Observ. *That what Christ promiseth and predicteth in this book of Prophesies, must surely come to pass.*

And that the truth hereof may not fail, he adds another property taken out of chap. 1. v. 5. *He being the faithful and true witness.* Now what this *Amen* hath promised, predicted, and said in these prophesies must needs be sure and firm; for, *In him*, according to that of the Apostle, 2 Cor. 1. 20. *are all the promises of God, yea and Amen*: and that he may get the better faith and credence thereunto, he adds another title, *The faithful and true witness*. *Paul* could publickly profess, That he was a faithful witness of the mind and counsel of God to his disciples, and that he had hid nothing back that did necessarily conduce to their salvation: and think ye that Christ in these Revelations hath not dealt as the faithful and true witness, who is the God of all truth himself? O ye of little faith, that will not believe the truth of those Prophesies, the downfal of the Beast, *Babylon*, and the whore, together with the resurrection of the witnesses, and the churches glorious restored state on earth before the end of the world, which are clearly and fully asserted and evidenced from this book of Prophesies? Hath not Christ promised it that is the *Amen*? in whom all the promises are yea and *Amen*, and coming from him that is the true and faithful witness, that can never fail? And to take off all suspition of failure of the truth of those prophesies, there is a third property here added, *The beginning of the Creation of God*. This hath relation to that description of Christ in chap. 1. v. 8. *καὶ ἀρχὴ τὸν κόσμον ἦν ἡ σῆ*. It may be rendered either, *The beginning of the Creation of God*, or, *The principality of the Creation of God*. For Christ is both the beginning of all creatures; for, *by him all things were made, and without him nothing were made*: and he is also the supreme Prince and Governour of all the works of the creation; for so it necessarily follows, That all things should be subject to his principality and government, who did at first create them, and give a Being to them. Therefore to shut up this, The sayings of these Prophesies in this book must needs be sure and come to pass in their appointed seasons, seeing the *Amen*, the *faithful and true witness*, and the *Creator, Preserver, and Governour of all the works of the Creation* hath said and spoken them; who will not then believe them, coming first from so faithful and true a witness, and from one who is the beginning and Prince of the whole creation, and therefore most able to perform them?

Verse 15. *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot.*

This church of *Laodicea*, as she comes last in place, so she comes last in spiritual graces of all her sister churches: Christ findes nothing in her that is truly commendable: Even in the churches of *Sardis* and *Pergamus*, though as good as dead, and mixed with much corruptions, yet there was found in them somewhat praiseworthy, some undefiled Names that were not carried aside by the false Doctrines of *Jezebel*; but in *Laodicea* nothing is found commendable; and therefore the hears of nothing from Christ but matter of reproof, and of the desperateness of her spiritual state and condition. Doubtless there were some sincere faithful Witnesses in this church of *Laodicea*, notwithstanding the Spirit's silence in it, or else she could not be properly numbered as one of the golden candlesticks, or as a church of Christ, their number being but small, they were not sufficient to give a denomination unto the whole; for indeed a body politique whither civil or spiritual, is to be denominated sound or unsound from the major part; as in the case of particular souls or persons, if grace be more prevalent in degree in the soul then sin and corruption, it is to be tearmed a sincere gracious soul; but if sin be most prevalent, it may be justly tearmed a sinful and unregenerate soul. So is the case of political churches, if their frame constitution and matter be most unsound and corrupt, such churches are not to be denominated sound healthful bodies: We are not to call darkness light, or light darkness: Though for their profession of their faith they be called churches of Christ; yet for the deadness thereof, they may with *Sardis* be rightly tearmed dead ones, yea twice dead and to be plucked up by the roots. Doubtless under Prelacy, both English and Romish, there were and are diverse pretious christians and Saints of Christ; as in the days of *Elijah*, when the Idol of Baal and his worship and the Priests thereof were exalted, yet then in that corrupt state of *Israel*, there were seven thousand that bowed not the knee to Baal; yet them few faithful ones in the days of *Elijah*, or those in the days of Prelacy, &c. Popery came far short to denominate Israel at that time, or our English or Foreign Nations, under that corrupt frame or temper of antichristian Prelacy, to be praise-worthy churches, or sound, sincere and healthful in their general matter frame or constitution. But to return to the charge against *Laodicea*,

I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot.] *Laodicea* was of a strange mongrel composure and temper, *neither cold nor hot*, moulded and compacted as a certain odd extraction of two contraries, cold and heat: I thought before this, that that maxime was in all things unquestionable, *In medio consistit virtus*: It seems true

true Religion will not admit of that Principle; for *Laodicea* is here claimed to be in the mean; that is, in a frame or temper which is neither hot nor cold. By *hot* is here understood one that is zealous, fervent in spirit; for the truth and worship of God, that cannot endure any corruptions, will-worships or superstitions shall be admitted in the true christian Worship and Religion; and such a one is called a hot fervent or zealous christian; and this can never be too intense as unto the degrees thereof, if it be considerate, and according to sound knowldg. The ignorant inconsiderate zeal is reproved and condemned as dangerous and pernicious, not the sound and orthodox: It is not with God's graces as with moral habits of virtues, wherein both the extremes straying from mediocrity, either in the excess or in the defect, are faults and vices; as the excess of liberality may run into prodigality, and the defect into covetous parsimony; or the excess in fortitude may be called temerity and fool-hardiness, and the defect cowardice and pusillanimity, and so in the rest: but in gracious habits the case is different, Souls cannot exceed therein, *Be ye holy as your heavenly Father is holy*; no less then an aim unto perfection will serve turn; be zealous, fervent, boylng hot for God and his truth, it being sound and considerate, it will admit of no mediocrity: Lukewarmness, or half friend to God and his ways, is equally an abomination in God's sight (for he requires the whole heart) as is coldness or deadnesst itself; and therefore this strange commixture of tempers in *Laodicea* is exploded by Christ as most dangerous and pernicious, and therefore adds, *I would thou wert cold or hot.* Hence Note,

Observ. *A lukewarm temper among Christians is not only disapproved of by Christ, but also dangerous and pernicious to their souls welfare.*

Christ could not give one good word of *Laodicea* for this very reason; but in the next verse was ready to spew her out, for this her remissness and mediocrity. Some will neither be fast friends to Religion, nor yet utterly opposite unto it, a true hermaphroditical Laodicean temper: But what makes them thus to hancker and halfe between two extremes, that they are neither hot nor cold? In their very foreheads you may read the reason, worldly intrest, worldly profit, worldly honours do so over-bias them that they will be partly religious, and so far forth friends unto it, as may get them repute, and so be accounted prudeat, civil, and honest men; but for the better part of it, to have the heart upright for God, and the affections kindled and intense upon and for the glory of God in the day of tryals and persecutions, they will not touch upon that, they did not take Christ upon such account, to follow him to his crois, there they will leave him; as long as he provides loaves for them they will follow him, but when he is dragged to the Judgment Hall, as our true summer-

bird at the approach of winter, they fly into their holes for security, and will not appear more for Christ, until he returns with a sun shine and spring of prosperity upon them. These are our moderate politique state christians, who are neither hot nor cold, true Hermaphrodites in Religion, that will not move a foot farther in matters thereof then what the State dictates to them: If the Prince, as in the days of *Q. Mary*, command Popery, Popery shall up for them; if a *Q. Elizabeth* succeed, all presently reform and become Protestants; if she will have Prelacy in the church maintained, there will be found assertors enough of its *jure divino*; if Presbiteries shall take the Throne, all of our State christians will presently fall in to the Geneva and Scottish garb; if Independency shall get at top, presently our Laodiceans run to New-England for a model; if that again come out of fashion, they are ready to run to *Amsterdam* for a new pattern: So indifferent are such Laodicean christians in matters of Religion, that whatsoever form or interest of all sorts shall be uppermost, they will be sure to be of that side; and this proceeds from their lukewarm temper and defect, or want of heat or true zeal in the Religion they profess; if they were zealous in any form, though unsound, yet they would more closely stick unto it: *Paul*, whiles he was a persecuting *Saint*, was zealous though in a bad case: So the Jews had a zeal unto God, though not according to knowledg: *Rom. 10. 1.* The Papists to this day continue zealous to their Superstitions and will Worship: Only those that pretend highest and to be raised out of the graves of Antichrist, and to come to a higher pitch of Reformation, then any other christian Professors in the world, are like true Laodiceans, neither hot nor cold. I believe that Master *Brightman* though not Prophetically, yet prudentially enough, likned and applied the state of our English church, as a true counterpane of its pattern, to *Laodicea*, in the times when he wrote; for we may observe still the same natural temper in her children at present, as he observed in their fore-fathers in his time; they are of that mediocrity, that they care not what Religion they follow, so their interests, honors, and estates are secured and maintained; I confess they are willing to admit of part of the truths of Christ in Doctrines; but for the ministration of Discipline, Governments, and Ministerial Functions, they are very well still contented to retain them that come from *Egypt* and *Babylon*, and not from Christ and his holy church; therefore they are to look to it least they are spewed out as their fore-fathers the Prelates, for their Laodicean temper and half Reformation, which hitherto they have but as yet attained to.

object. But here it may be said, May not christians be too hot, too zealous in their intentions towards things of their Religion? were not a moderater carriage and temperature more commendable

dable in them, and more advantageous to the work of the Gospel than an over fiery zealous one?

To answer this Question, first understand, whereof zeal is compounded, and that is, first of an intention of the affections, or an enlarged love on the thing beloved. Secondly, Of jealousy, which is with great indignation and grief, when an injury (true or supposed) is offered to the thing to fervently loved: So this affection of zeal is not simply good or evil but is an indifferent passion found in men both good and evil; for the Apostles were zealous, and so were the Pharisees, Christians were zealous, so were the Jews, so some of the reformed are zealous in their ways, so many also of the Papists; but that that denominates zeal either good or evil, is first in respect of its object; godly zeal must have the knowledg of a right object; it must be truly God's glory, God's worship, God's truth, God's will and doctrine either in part or in the whole, and that indubitably, that denominates a godly zeal: A zeal to God out of Christ, as the Jews had, will not suffice to call it a truly godly zeal, because it was not according to knowledg, nor having an adequate and compleat object; 'tis true, their zeal towards God was good and commendable in them, but because it was not guided by sound knowledg, it was blind and erroneous; and therefore vicious for want of a compleat object.

Secondly, It grieves for the wrong truly done and not supposed, as the Jews thought was done by the preaching of the Gospel unto the glory of God and his true worship. True godly zeal must have right ends, it ever affecteth and seeketh the honour of God, and not self praise and vain glory. Examples of this true godly zeal we have in Christ, when he whipped the buyers and sellers out of the Temple, *Joh. 2. 15.* and in *Phineas*, *Numb. 25. 8. 11.* in *Paul* and *Barnabas* when they rent their cloathes, *Act. 14. 19.* and *Moses* when he broke the Tables, *Exod. 23.* and in *Paul* for the *Corinthians*, *1 Cor. 1. 11.* and for the *Galatians*, *Gal. 4. 19.* But many for want of right objects, right ends, and other due ingredients, have missed of true zeal, as *Demetrius* his zeal for *Diana*, *Act. 19.* whom he ought not to have loved; so *Paul* a Pharisee was zealous, but he loved that that he should not have loved, that is, his own righteousness by the Law, as the rest of the Pharisaical Jews did. *Jehu* was zealous but failed in the manner, *2 King. 10. 6.* The Apostles out of zeal wished fire upon the Inhabitants of *Samaria*, *Luk. 9. 54.* failed in the end of their zeal, it being not out of pure affection to God's glory, or out of charity unto their neighbours, but out of revenge and impatience, as from *Bonarges*, Sons of Thunder; and how zealous and hot are the Papists this day for their scarlet Strumpet and her fornications, which ought not to be loved, and therefore no true zeal, but spurious and impious. The reason of all this is that

that a mans intentions are never good, be they never so highly pretending thereunto; but when they are built upon a good warrant, to wit, the Word of God, and referred to right ends, namely, the praise of God, and the good of his church and people.

Now to return to answser the doubt proposed, having cleared what true zealis, with the circumstances thereof, I answer, That we cannot be too zealous when a right object and right ends are proposed. *Paul* in *Rom. 12. 11.* exhorteth men to be fervent in the spirit, hot, boylng hot in spiritual affairs: What think ye of *Paul* when he opposed *Peter* to his face in the busines of circumcision, and would not give way to his dissimulation, no not for an hour? so zealous was he for the truth of God. God is so zealous of his own honour and glory, that he smote *Uzzab*, *2 Sam. 6. 7.* for putting only his hand unto the Ark, out of an ignorant zeal to save it from falling unto the ground; one would have thought, that God would have commended his zeal, and spared his ignorance herein, but being not according unto knowledge, but contrary to the command of God, he suffered for it. No good intentions and meanings will make that action or duty good or lawful, be it ever so speciously religious and gracious, that is not warranted by the rule of the Scriptures: the best duties for want of this scantling, are turned into sin. And as God is zealous of his glory, so he makes his Ministers like himself, *Heb. 1. 7.* *He makes his Ministers a flame of fire.* I would have all indifferent lukewarm moderate State-christians to consider with themselves, whether could the Apostles and first Disciples of Christ, ordinarily propagate the Gospel thorow the world, if they had been all of an indifferent lukewarm Laodicean temper? Christ himself was thought by the people to be one too hot, that his zeal was beyond his judgement, *Mark 3. 21.* and therefore said, *He was beside himself:* *Paul* was also accounted mad, not only by *Festus*, for his zeal towards God, *Acts 26. 24.* but also by the christian *Corinthians*, *2 Cor. 5. 13.* So *Michol Icoft* at *David* as one of the fools for his zeal; yet though they, and other Saints of God were vilified and reproached by the ignorant world, yet their zeal have laid that corner stone, and foundation of salvation, that all the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. What think you, will the scarlet whore that sitteth as a Queen be dethroned, or Antichrist be discovered and overthrown by a moderate lukewarm Laodicean State, Religion, and Temper? Surely the first Beginners and Founders of our Reformation, were of another spirit then we in these days are of, or else it would have made but a slow procedure: for want of this true zeal, our Reformation is at a stand, and in spiritual growth, *non progreedi, est regredi.* But I would still be understood, that it must be a zeal mixed with the former ingredients, and with sound knowledge, that it may be as an eye, and a guide, to direct and conduct it aright, both in the things

things to be loved, and in the manner and ends of their love, or else, zeal not rightly regulated, may be dangerous and pernicious. There are three sorts of people that offend and fail in their zeal.

First, Those that are stark cold, and have no zeal at all to Gods glory, or his worship, as the profane worldling is.

Secondly, Those indifferent lukewarm christians, that are neither hot nor cold, as those Laodiceans were, and as the Israelites of old, halting between God and Baal, *1 Kings 18. 21.*

The third sort are, They whose zeal is blind, void of sound knowledge and godly wisdom, who covering their own carnal affections with the cloak of glorifying of God, rush on inconsiderately into many evil and unlawful actions: Some on this pretence, endeavour again in these our days, to set up Antichrist in his Throne among us: Others, on the other hand, for want of this sound knowledge joyned to their zeal, under pretence of pulling down Antichrist and the Scarlet whore, they endeavour to undermine and pull down all Magistracy, Ministry, Scriptures, and all the Ordinances in Christ's churches whatsoever, whereof this age of ours affords as many lamentable examples as any former whatsoever; therefore let every one be instant wth God in prayer, to add wisdom and sound knowledge unto his zeal.

Secondly I answer, That in controverted opinions of Religion, that lye deep and dark, whether they are the will of God or not, moderation in such things is most commendable, and let every one walk as he hath attained unto; for I am of opinion, that all controverted points and mysteries in the Word of God, will not be made manifest unto us, until the day of the revelation of all things, when Christ the great Key-bearer of the House of *David* shall appear, to open all the sealed books, and no man shall shut again; and so that Scripture in such things may be rightly applied, *Be not righteous over much:* that is, be not over zealous, hot, or fervent for them. But for plain, obvious, and perspicuous commands and truths of God, as whether Christ's precepts and commands, or Antichrist's, are to be followed and embraced, our zeal and intentions here cannot be too hot, we cannot possibly here admit of a Syncratism, or a mean, as worldly wise *Cæsander* would endeavour between Papist and Protestant; either God must be God, or *Baal* must be God: either Christ must have the Throne, or else Antichrist must reign; they cannot possibly inhabit in one Temple, God and Dagon will not correspond; no degree of zeal herein will suffice, but what is the highest, and aimeth at perfection: the defect whereof, either that of coldness, wh.ch is more remote, or that of lukewarmness, which is nearer, is equally faulty in this particular; either let us be altogether Romish, or altogether Reformed; either fully zealous for Christ and his ways, or else cold thereunto; for no mean will serve turn,

Therefore

Therefore Christ in the next words says to lukewarm *Laodicea*, *I would thou wert cold or hot.* That is, I would thou wert resolved one way or other, I rather thou wert any thing then what thou art; I would as rather thou wert of no Religion, as of this mongrel uncertain hotchpotch Religion that thou art of. From these words Note,

Observe. *That a luke-warm Religion is equally, if not more displeasing unto God, then irreligion, or profaneness itself.*

Christ here prefers coldness, the most remote degree in Religion, before a nearer luke-warmness: Christ wished *Laodicea*, either to be hot, zealous in the things of God, or else cold, that is, dead, strange, and alienated to the things of God, rather then indifferent and lukewarm, as she was. It is as good, and there were as much hopes of us, if we were altogether Romish, then half Reformed as we are.

The reasons that this luke-warm temper is more blame-worthy and dangerous then coldness it self, are,

First, Because where there are most means of grace, there sh.uld be greatest improvement, Sin is more sinful, where grace is more abounding, *the servant that knows his masters will and doth it not, is worthy of many stripes*; the sin of our first parents was the more aggravating, being committed in paradise; the fall of the Angels in heaven left them remediless and unpardonable: and that idolatry of those twenty five men in *Ezek. 8.16*, between the Porch and the Altar, was most detestable: God would rather that his grace should not be known, then that it should be neglected and despised; he will be sanctified of all that come near unto him; Therefore if *Baal be God, follow him: why halt ye between both!* God hateth such scrupulous inquisition, as if it were hard to determine which part to follow.

Secondly, Because there are greater hopes of the conversion of the irreligious profane of the world, if God shall be pleased to afford them the means, then of the luke-warm Christians, who think all is well with them because of their moderation and peaceableness, which indeed is honoured of the world, and for some other external priviledges that they enjoy: O! How hard a thing it is this day, to perswade the moderate indifferent State-christians into the true power of godliness, or unto a fervent zeal for God and his Truths, they think they have enough in their birth-right, church priviledges, or common profession, to make them everlastingly happy, and therefore think they, what need they trouble themselves more, they never intended to take heaven by violence, if it would descend unto them in a bed of Doune, in an easie way, then they would be in for it; but if otherwise it be to be taken by striving and violence, then let the violent take it for them, they will have nothing more to do with it: Therefore surely Publicans and Harlots shall sooner enter into the Kingdom of

of heaven, then such easie luke-warm Professors, who are neither hot nor cold, I would they were hot or cold.

Ver. 16. *Therefore because thou art luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, it will come to pass that I will spew thee out of my mouth.*

The greatness of *Laodicea*'s sin for her luke-warm temper, appears by the severe punishment afflicted on her for the same; one would have thought that luke-warmness being some degrees nearer unto heat then coldness, should be somewhat more commendable, as nearest unto heat, yet they are equally abominable unto God; for he will spue out all such indifferent Professors out of his mouth, as offensive and nauseous to his stomach: It is said by Naturalists, That the stomach will rather admit of hot or cold things in it quietly, then tepid or luke-warm, by reason that it puts forth its digestive faculty more operative and effective towards such things in which work it is delighted; but luke-warm things being near to its own natural heat and temper, gives not so much delight unto it, nor puts it so a working, as the contrary quality does, and therefore remains therein unconcocted, and of easie egestion, as by experiment of drinking warm water it appeareth. If it be demanded who is to be spewed out? The answer is ready, Thou luke-warm Angel of *Laodicea*, and thou luke-warm church of *Laodicea*; for though the charge be directed to the particular Angels of each church; yet the churches too being guilty of the same sins, are under the same judgements and threats which are inscribed unto their Angels or Pastors; and therefore there is still added as an Epiphonema to each Epistle, *He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*

For the matter of their sin, it is luke-warmness, an indifferent disposition and temper in Religion, which is neither hot nor cold, which was opened in the last preceden: verse, and the danger thereof demonstrated accordingly: but in this (by the way) I would be understood, not that Christ simply alloweth coldness in Religion, but only preferreth it before luke-warmness, for the reasons before on the last verse expressed; and we daylie see, that God spareth longer notoriously wicked persons, or those that are strangers from him altogether, rather then the luke-warm Professors: and this appears from God's long forbearance of the church of *Rome*, who hath played egregioully the harlot, and departed from the truth, and yet flourishest outwardly, whiles the Reformed churches are corrected and chastised out of hand, when they incline unto luke-warmness and indifferency in Religion. Hence Note,

Observe. *God's judgements on luke-warm Christians are dreadful judgments.*

This appeareth, if we consider but what Christ meaneth, when he saith, *He will spew him out of his mouth*; by which is meant, an utter casting out of this luke-warm church from her church-state and profession, he will no longer entertain her as his candlestick, but will discharge his care of her in that particular, as a stomach-sick person with eating or drinking that which he loatheth, desireth vomit to ease him of his sickness; so Christ desireth to discharge his stomach, his care, his vigilance of this loathed luke-warm church.

2. As meat once vomited up lies loathed and abhorred, and never to be licked up again but by Dogs or Sows; so this luke-warm church is to be spewed out as a loathed thing, nor that Christ would ever return to so unclean a thing again.

3. As in vomiting, an unclean place is sought for, so Christ will seek for an unclean place, to spew out those luke-warm Professors into: *He will make the place of their habitation a Cage of all unclean birds, Zion and Oiim shall dwell there.*

Hath not Christ begun this work of spewing out of his mouth the luke-warm Prelatical church within our days? How long did it lye as a loathed and indigested lump in the stomach of Christ before it came to egestion? This was Christ's goodness, long expecting repentance and thorow reformation from our churches, who began in the days of Queen *Elisabeth* to be warm in Religion, and never came to a farther degree then luke-warmness, or a moderate civil State-religion; and therefore Christ's stomach being long troubled with this undigested bit, up it must come at last. So it was in *Germany*, in *Bohemia*, the *Palatinate*, *Siria*, *Alsatia*, *Austria*, and other Provinces there, whiles God expected they should reform up to the pattern in the Mount, they only stick'd to *Luthers* and *Zwinglius* first principles, and moved no farther, and withal, abated so much of their first heat, that they became luke-warm and indifferent to things of Religion; as if Popery and Reformation were things indifferent; and so cloathed their reformed doctrines and worship with many of the Harlots raggs, rites, and trumperies; for which tepid and mongrel disposition of theirs, they were severely chastised by Christ, and some of the churches quite spewed out of his mouth for this their sin: hath not God done the very same thing with us here in *England* here of late for this hermaphrodical religion that was professed amongst us, half popish, half reformed, half rotten, half sound, even spewed it out root and branch, never to be licked up more? Is it not also to be feared, that the same mongrel luke-warm condition is creeping in upon us again? What meaneth else the many vindications that are set forth of late, of the lawfulness of their practices, doctrines, missions, calls, hyperarchical superintendencies, national churches, and maintenancies, and the like? If Christ have vomited them out as unholy things, he will not

return

return again to take them up, they are loathed of him for their mongrel temper, and therefore spewed out; and if you will know who they are that endeavours to lick them up again, They are dogs, I mean, whelps of *Rome*, that desire to return to their vomit; They are Sows, I mean, unclean worldlings, that make their belly their God, that desire to return to wallow in the myre of Antichristian fooleries. I shall say no more but this, If Reformation according to Gospel pattern be the way, be zealous in it, burn in it, walk in it, stoutly, courageously, as children of light: but if *Rome* be the way to the new Jerusalem, take her mark, follow her, and be not ashamed of her; for Christ will not endure a middle temperature between both, either be all Romish, or all Reformed; there is no medium between heaven and hell, neither between true christian and antichristian, either be the one or the other: for, because thou art neither hot nor cold, it will come to pass to thee, as it did to *Laodicea*, Christ will spew thee out of his mouth. Be wise therefore ye children of light, *Hold fast the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free*; Have not your faces or thoughts towards the onyons and flesh pots of *Egypt* again, but let your faces be to *Zion*-wards, to build up the breaches thereof, and be hot, zealous, fervent therein, and that according to knowledge, and then doubtless, God will be with you, and lead you into *Goshen*, into a land of peace and rest.

Vers. 17. *Because thou sayest I am rich, and encreased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blinde, and naked.*

Laodiceas sin of luke-warmness, had a two-fold ground or rise. 1. Proceeding from a false perswasion of her own worthiness. 2. From the ignorance of her own misery. Her vain perswasion of her own worth, proceeds from the consideration and conceit of her great wealth and riches, not only spiritual, which she wanted, and Christ adviseth her to buy of him in the next verse, but temporal and worldly; she boasts her self not only to be rich, and abounding in riches of both sorts, but also to want nothing, she had such a fulness, that her contentation was compleat: Many persons may abound, and be rich, and yet want much of fulness of satisfaction and contentation: but the church of *Laodicea*, it seemed, abounded to contentation, in her own conceit, which is the highest pitch of riches; for, *she had need of nothing*: and hence grew that sin of hers, luke-warmness, and half christianity. From hence Note,

Observ. 1. *That the most rich and abounding wealthy churches, are aptest to become the more remiss, moderate, indifferent, and luke-warm christians.*

In the primitive times, when the churches were poor and low in the world, they were purest, more zealous and eminent for truth and martyrdom; but when the church was indulged, and lull'd in the lap of *Constantine* the great, she grew more remiss, and as riches and preferments were heaped on her, she grew dayly more luke-warm, till at the last she became key-cold, as unto the truth as it is in *Jesus*, and so shortly became purely Antichristian: when the great preferments of Episcopal Lordships, Deanries, Arch-deanries, Prebendaries, &c. were on foot among us, Christ's Pastors became silken Priests, and where was then true zeal for the truth? That was driven into corners, among some poor Puritans, Brownists, Anabaptists, so scornfully called, and the like, but for the rest, they were but half christians, a medley of moral civilians, half Romish, half Reformed: and this proceeds from the nature of riches and prosperity, which is apter to choke the seed of grace, than adversity, and to bring a forgetfulness of God, and a luke-warmness upon the hearts of those that do abound therein: and therefore the children of God are so often warned in the Word, that they take heed to themselves, lest when they are full, and cloyed with God's blessings, through overfulness they should forget the Lord.

Thou sayest thou art rich, &c.

And knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, &c.

The other cause of *Laodicea*'s sin, is the ignorance of her misery, which she could not see and perceive, by reason she was blinded by her outward prosperity and riches. From whence Observe,

Observ. 2. That the most ignorant, and wretchedly miserable Church, is the most boasting, and highest pretending to spiritual riches and graces.

Doth not the church of *Rome* this day vaunt, that she is the only rich one, increased with goods, and have need of nothing? And 'tis true, if she only meant of worldly goods, she is most pompous and replete therein, but that is not all, she vaunts too of her spiritual riches, she calls her self *Roma Sancta*, the only Mother church, the holy catholique church, and no salvation without her pales, the only Keeper of the Treasures of the Spirit, and dispenseth them where she pleaseth; and yet notwithstanding this high claim and pretence, who more truly wretched, miserable, blinde, ignorant, naked, and destitute of all true graces then she? *Laodicea* was so vain-glorious, that she could boast of her riches, and yet she was the poorest of the seven of all the Reformed churches. Our English (under Episcopacy) was wont to bear the Bell for outward splendour and glorying, not only in her external riches, but also of the magnificence of her worship beyond all others; and yet among them all, who nearer and

and dearer to her Sister *Rome* then she? She was then looked upon as the first returning daughter to her Mother Harlot; as the Apostle *Bayly* in his Epistle to the Reader of his book called *End to Controversie*, testifies, page 67. where he says, *That there were no other difference between them, but that the Tapers upon their Altars wanted light, and their Altars Priests, and their Ceremonies purpose.* But the Lord since hath made a wider breach, his name be praised for it, and rendered her more irreconcileable to *Rome* then ever heretofore, and we trust, never more to be made up between them.

For further describing the wretchedness of the highly pretending church of *Rome*, which may be truly parallel'd to the church of *Laodicea* in this particular of vain-glorying and boasting, she hath here five degrees ascribed to her. The two first are as common affections or accidents of her disease; in respect of her self, or of others, she was in a pitiful, lamentable, and miserable state and condition: The three latter declare the very nature of her disease; *she was poor, blinde, and naked*: you know to be poor, is to be beggarly, to the word *alouds* in the Greek signifies, a beggar: She was not poor in spirit and in her own eyes, which is a blessed poverty, *Mat. 5. 3.* but she was a poor beggarly miserable one, one that is proud and beggarly, which is hateful, *odious*: She is a true beggar, beg she will, and never leave begging of the Kings, Princes, Nobles, and Potentates of the world, till she have gotten the choicest fat things of the earth to become her patrimony. She is a stout sturdy beggar, if you will not give, she will take: Beggars lye in the crois lanes, and high-ways, to beg of all they meet; so beggars of this rampant church lye close to all great Assemblies, to Dyets, Parliaments, Counsel-Tables, Great Mens houses, to beg the Advowsons, and to catch the scraps of preferments that fall in their way: I could wish there were none of this beggarly poverty among us at this day. Christ's true Ministers should be of a nobler temper and Spirit then to serve at Tables for lucre sake; their master will provide for them in a more honourable way, if they can but trust on him for their sustentation and livelyhood. It was a wise observation of *M. Brightman's* concerning our English clergie in his days under Episcopacy, *That the Angel of England* in plain terms grew wealthy by begging, and as he further says, neither is he in very truth, nor is to be called ought, save my Lord Beggar. In the next place, blindnes is added to her beggarliness, to make it the more grievous: a blinde beggar is the most deplored and miserable of all beggars, for being necessitated to seek and beg for his living abroad, yet want of sight will not let him seek; so blindness of minde, want of true spiritual understanding, where true riches lies, is a great addition of misery to a poor beggarly church that makes her to seek amiss, and to call that riches which is not truly

truly riches; from this ignorance and blindness it proceeds, that the church of *Rome*, and others that follow her steps, do beg and seek greedily after riches, honours, and preferments, that are merely transitory and vain, and leaves alone the true riches, the treasure which is from above, that never perisheth: yea they are so blinde, and obstinately blinde, that they are ready to strike at him that endeavouereth to convince them of blindness, and to shew them the way unto everlasting treasure. In the last place there is added Nakednes, as an aggravation of the misery of this church. When one is stript of his garments, and rendered naked, his shame is laid open to the view, according to that of *Nahum 3.5*. It is not sufficient that she is a poor blinde beggar, but she is a naked blinde beggar, the most contemptible of all sorts: We have seen the poverty, the blindness and ignorance of the church of *Rome*, and Christ hath also discovered her nakedness unto us, we know her shames, and wherein her secret abominations does consist: it is in vain for her now to boast of her spiritual pomps and trumperies, whiles Christ hath discovered her skirts, and shewn us that she is a beggarly one, void of all true spiritual riches, that she is a blinde one, ignorant of the ways of true happiness, that she is naked, that is, for want of spiritual garments about her, she is lett open and bare to all shame and reproaches that are cast against her for her deformities, which are obvious to every spiritual discerning eye. O that God would make the Reformed churches amongst us, to discern between true riches, and those which are not so, but only in pretence; that he would put a nobler spirit into them then that of *Laodicea*, a beggarly poor one, waiting for the crumbs of preferments at the Tables of the Great ones of the world: Is not their Lord and Master the Lord and Sovereign of the whole creation, and shall he provide for the Ravens, and the Lions whelps, their meat in due season, and will he forget the members of his own body? God forbid! Oh Christ, which art the true light of the Father, anoint our eyes with eye-salve, that our blindness may be done away, and discover our nakedness unto us, that we may seek unto thee for a covering; for gold that is tryed, and for a rayment, that we may be clothed, that our nakedness may not appear before thee, to our utter shame and confusion, Amen.

Verse

Verse 18. *I counsel thee to buy of me Gold tryed in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white rayment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.*

You have hitherto heard of *Laodicea* sin, want and misery, here follows her remedy proportionable to her disease; here is gold, not outward glittering or pretended gold, but tryed gold, offered to help her of her poverty: Here is white rayment, a glorious rayment of Christ's righteousness offered, to cover her shame and nakedness: and here is Eye-salve offered, even true knowledge and wisdom from above, that she may see the way unto everlasting happiness.

But to open the words a little more fully: *I counsel thee.* It is Christ that counsels and advises, and who will not follow it? The matter of his counsel is offered to the church of *Laodicea*, and unto us also, if we be found in the same vain-glorious, yet beggerly condition as she was in; for the word was not written only to them, but to us; for observe what the Spirit often says; *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.* So the matter of Christ's counsel is as well unto us, as unto *Laodicea*, and that threefold, as the disease was threefold. 1. To buy gold, tryed gold, which is set against poverty. 2. White Garments, which is for a covering of her nakedness. 3. Eye-salve, which is a remedy for her blindness.

First by the way, from the party counselling to buy, he being the same from whom it is bought, *I counsel thee to buy gold of me, Note,*

Observ. *That all true spiritual riches and graces are to be fetch'd from Christ alone.*

Christ sends us not to our own works, or to his blessed mother, or to any other Saint departed, with so many *Ave Marias*, so many *Pater Nosters*, or so many Vows and Pilgrimages to buy them at their hands; but he tells us, *Come buy them of me:* Christ alone is the great dispenser of his Fathers Treasure, all power is given into his hands, and in vain to seek the Kingdom of God or the treasures thereof, but in, by, and through the Son; and it is most just it should be so, it being the purchase of his death and passion; he powred out his soul unto death for us that he might have power to heal our souls of all their infirmities; therefore he is made unto us both wisdom, justification, sanctification, and all in all.

The manner of seeking this gold is by bargain and sale, *I counsel thee to buy of me:* I shall inquire how this bargain is made up,

First, Understand in all legal contracts, there is an agreement of both parties, or else it cannot be a bargain. Se-

Secondly, In some bargains and contracts ther is a legal consideration given for the thing bargained for, either to the full value, or somewhat equitably proportionable thereunto, or,

Lastly, There are other absolute bargains and sales of lands and goods, disposed therein freely, only on the consideration of the donors or granters of love, affection and preferment to the parties beloved, and so given freely to them and to their heirs for ever, without so much as paying a penny by way of legal retribution for it; yea the donor often is so free in his deed of gift, that the donee is freed of all fear of forfeiture of his Estate; for there is not reserved so much as a Rose or Pepper corn by way of Rent, that for non payment thereof, the State should be become forfeited: And that party that would not be thankful to such a free giver, is worse then an Infidel.

Now to our heavenly bargain, and to apply: If we will buy of Christ gold and heavenly Treasure, we must first come unto him, and strike up the bargain with him; he will not sell unto us against our wills (though he himself must make us first willing) and therefore he cries, Isa. 55. 1. *Come unto the waters, come ye buy and eat:* and Rev. 22. 17. Christ is very willing to sell us freely, and we must be ready to buy it and accept it freely; all that he expects at our hands, is to agree with him on his own terms, and that is to accept it and receive it freely, believe that he can and will do it, and it is done.

Secondly, He ties us up to no legal consideration or conditions on our part, that on nonperformance thereof, be they ever so small, we should forfeit the State of our Inheritance; he hath paid and performed fully all our dues and legal conditions unto the Father for us, and in our stead; and he hath taken the possession of the whole Inheritance into his own hand; and therefore in the third place he is upon a free deed of gift with us, and if we will buy at his hands; we are to come and buy, wine and milk without money, without price, Isa. 55. 1. and Christ calls in Rev. 22. 17. to him that is athirst, *Come, and whoever will, let him take the water of life freely;* and they now that will not be obedient to the commands and laws of this gracious donor; by way of gratitude and thankfulness for so glorious and free an Inheritance, bestowed upon them, are not worthy of the least mercy in his Kingdom if this Inheritance were entailed on us on condition of payment or performance of a small petty grain of corn or the like, as is the mite of our faith or obedience, &c. as the Arminians would have it, we should be in bondage fear and danger all our life long, if not at least forfeit all by our non-payment and performance; therefore blessed be God, that hath not left our salvation in our own hands, but founded it on the rock Christ, which cannot be removed.

Quest.

Quest. But why doth Christ here counsel us to buy gold of him?

I answer, He that goes about to buy a great Treasure is very careful, diligent, and his affections intense upon it, that none put him out of his bargain: So it must be here for this heavenly Treasure, we must be earnest with Christ to strike up this bargain, we must not let him alone by our prayers until we have obtained this precious pearl at his hands: 'Tis true, Christ will sell us this pearl freely, yet we must agree with him for it; though we have nothing to give him in the least, by way of legal compensation for it, yet we must buy it, receive it in its own way and method. If you will buy any gods that you want, you must repair to the Fair or place where it is to be bought: So if you want tryed gold to enrich you, or garments to cover you, or eye-salve to enlighten you, you must come to Christ who is the Merchant of these heavenly wares, upon his Fair days, when such precious wares are set to sale, and to his Ordinances in his Assemblies, on the publicke days of his heauenly Bartering, if you will attain unto this heavenly Treasure. But to proceed, And that you may the better know the nature of this heavenly Treasure, it is here called, *Gold tryed in the fire.* You formerly heard that the church of *Laodicea* was an outside golden candlestick, yea, the boasted and pretended high to true riches, yet for all her vaunting she was *πλοχδε μενδικος*, a poor beggerly church; but here is gold that will enrich her to purpose, it is *gold tryed in the fire*; it is not sophisticate or hypocritical gold, but real tryed gold. Hence Note,

Obseru. *That the graces that come from Christ, are the only true and real graces.*

The church of *Laodicea* doubtless was rich enough in some respects, yet she was a beggerly one because her riches was not from Christ. If we in those days come to our Ecclesiastical Functions, Livings and Benefices, not by a call from Christ, but by our own struglings, beginnings, strivings and endeavours thereunto, though thereby we may become outwardly rich, yet at best we are but basely beggerly rich; but the tryed gold that comes from Christ is such that makes the souls truly gracious where it is: It is not gotten by begging at the dores of the great ones of the world, but at the gates of the Temple, in that holy way and order of calling, chusing, ordaining, which Christ himself hath ordained in his word, this is truly refined gold, because it is the wisdom and way of God, which is as gold refined, *Prov. 8. 10.* and *Ps. 12. 7.* This is tryed, and therefore will hold water: It is true, we may become rich in the eye of the world, in parts, abilities, and humane learning, and they may shine like gold in the eyes of the injudicious, simple and ignorant; but alas! if Christ doth not sanctifie them to us, they may make us the worse, nor the better for them: *Major Clericus, major Hereticus.* If Christ gives us

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hearts to seek after his refined gold, then surely we shall no longer be so beggerly base, as to let up our own gilded parts in the room of Christ's true wisdom, which is as gold thrice refined; neither shall we any longer set up our own church ways and orders, according to our own prudential dictates, but shall come into the truly golden way of Christ, which is often tryed and approyed by the fire, and therefore avoideth not the touch-stone or fire of tryal, but standeth firm as the pillars of the house of God, and they that trust unto it and are partakers of it, do become rich, exceeding rich in all true spiritual graces, to their eternal glory: Therefore for shame ye Ministers and servants of Christ, that are truly such, and conscientious of your duties, leave of your beggerly trade, in purifying that that is no riches, and come to Christ and buy gold of him tryed in the fire, that will make you rich to purpose, and so shall ye shine like Stars of the greater magnitude, within the Firmament of your churches; I feare inc all is not gold that glisters with you; O how dangerous it is to be in such a seeming fair condition, when we conceit we are rich and lack nothing, whiles indeed we are poor, miserable, blind and naked. The Angel of Laodicea once thought as well of himself, as the Angel of *England* at present; but see his judgment, for his hypocritical, outside and half Religion, which is much to be feared by us also if we grow not hotter and repent; to wit, that it will shortly come to pass, that Christ will spew us out of his mouth, and leave our place desolate unto us; and this Christ doubtless would long since have done, if he had not a remnant amongst us that are tryed gold, for whose sake he doth preserve us; yet understand, that Christ knows how to cast off and burn up all the chaff, as he did the Prelatical party of late, in his judgments and fiery indignations, and to preserve the wheat, the godly, safe and secure; he will preserve them as gold in the Refiners fire, it shall suffer no diminution, whiles the dross suffers loss, and is quite burned up and consumed by it; therefore in time be wise, repent and follow, hear Christ's counsel, buy gold of him tryed in the fire, that thou maist be rich.

Secondly, The second part of this heavenly purchase is white rayment that thou maist be cloathed: We formerly heard of *Laodicea*'s nakedness, of her shameful nakedness, now here is a covering for her, a white garment that she may be cloathed, and that the shame of her nakedness do not appear: We know nakedness in it self was no shame before the fall, but since sin hath prevailed, it is become vile and shameful, as God provided for *Adam* after his fall, garments of skins to hide his shame; so Christ hath provided spiritually a white rayment, for the covering of all the spiritual defects and shame of the members of himself, the second *Adam*. Now this white rayment that is here provided and offered by Christ to *Laodicea* to cover her nakedness, may be taken

two

two ways, as *Laodicea* had a twofold nakedness and shame upon her, so here is a garment proportionable to her wants. First she was naked in respect of true righteousness; she was rich enough and righteous enough in her own eyes, as many of these days are; yet here is a garment provided by Christ for her, to cover her nakedness: This is that garment spoken of, *Rev. 17. 13, 14.* which is the long white Robes that the undefiled followers of the Lamb do walk in, that have washed their Robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Our sins bring shame, and misery, and nakedness upon us, and defilement on our souls, and it is Christ's blood that washes them white, takes off the stains, the guilt and obligation to wrath thereon, and serves for a white garment to cover, to hide and keep quite out of sight all our bloody spots and stains, as if they were never done or committed, and so are carried away on the head of this scape-Goat, into the land of forgetfulness never to be remembred more. Secondly, She is naked tooin respect of her outward garments, church officers, orders and ordinances; she might be rich enough in outward endowments, as riches, worldly wisdome, learning, &c. as some of our churches amongst us are, yet beggerly, poor and naked to the true calls, orders, ministrations and graces of the spirit; and therefore Christ here offers her a white rayment of his own making, for a covering of this her shame and nakedness, to wit a ministry of officers and ordinances, squared out in the Temple of God's holy Word, for call, for mission, for matter, for form, and not according to humane invention, notwithstanding which she might be naked still, open to shame still, and miserable still. Hence Note,

Observ. That the rayment of Christ's making is the only rayment that will reach all our necessities, and cover all our nakedness; all other garments will come short of this work.

If we should make a linsey-woolsey garment, partly of Christ's and partly of our own commixture, it would be like that in the Law, that was partly linnen and partly woollen, an abomination unto the Lord, yea for all that we might be cold and naked. Christ's garment is such a garment that it will reach us from top to toe, that no part of our shame or nakedness shall appear: Sin brings shame, and sin brings contempt and nakedness upon us, and Christ's rayment is a white rayment, an innocent rayment, a glorious honorable rayment, it will cover all our shame and nakedness, and therefore worth the buying; our own rayments are spotted, defiled, and will not serve the turn, but Christ's is white all over. If we expect to appear perfectly righteous, holy and just before God (or otherwise we shall never appear before him to approbation, for no unclean thing shall enter into his presence) then we must be sure to cloath our selves in the white rayment of this our elder brother. In the next place, if we have a desire to have the nakedness, shame, contempt and scorn that is cast upon

our churches, and is obvious to the whole world, to be healed, covered, and done away; then let us make haste, and clothe our selves with this white rayment that Christ does counsel us to buy of him; that is, let us speedily look into the holy Vestry of Christ's Word, and see what Garments Christ hath provided for his Spouse there: *The King's Daughter is all glorious within; yea thou art all fair my Love, there is no spot in thee,* Cant. 4. 7, 11. *and the smell of thy garments are like the smell of Lebanon.* When we cast off Christ's order in Discipline, church ordinances, offices, and missions, we cast off Christ's white rayment, and presently discover our shame and nakedness to the eye of the whole world. It was the advice of *Paul in Timothy*, 1 Tim. 4. 12. *Let no man despise thy youth.* And why? Because he had on the white rayment of Christ's true Ministry, and according to Christ's minde, which garment is so full of Majesty, though *Timothy* was but a youth, yet being clothed therewith, it rendered him not only above contempt, but truly gracious and honourable in the eyes of all. Some in the room of this, of Christ's own white rayment to cover their shame and nakedness, think it sufficient that they have their silken coats, or their formal Rochets, a call from a rich personage, and some Lording Prelates, and then all is well; but alas, they see not that they are miserable, and naked for all this: Though I should not contemn moderate and modest garments, yet *Elijah* in his hayrie mantle, or *John Baptist* in his leather girdle, and garment of Camels hair in the way of Christ, will attain the honour of true Prophets unto themselves, whilst the silken Priests in their own way, lye naked unto the shame and contempt of all: I speak not this to the reproach of any, but to discharge my conscience, like a good Phisitian, must ly ope the wound, and search it fully before he'll cure it; or like a faithful Pilot, that will discover the dangerous shelves and Rocks to all passengers, that they may avoid the danger, and if I be judged by any to have said too much herein, or beside the purpose, I answer in the words of *Paul*, in 2 Cor. 5. 13. *For whether we be beside our selves, it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your sakes Christians.*

3. In the last place, Christ adviseth *Laodicea*, *To anoint her eyes with Eye-salve.* Indeed she was dark and blonde to purpose, and therefore had need of Eye-salve to make her see the way to everlasting happiness: And where is she to get it? But from Christ, who applyeth the whole remedy for her disease, Gold to relieve her poverty, white Rayment to cover her nakedness, and Eye-salve to cure her blindness. Hence Note,

Observ. *That they that will truly see the way to eternal life, must come to Christ to receive Eye-salve from him.*

He is given as a covenant to open the eyes of the blinde, and to lead them in the paths of life: its in vain to go to our own prudence or carnal wisdom, that would more entangle us, and lead us out

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of the way, according to that saying of Christ in John 9. 39. *I am come into this world for judgement, that they that see not, should see; and that they that see (that is, in their own wisdom) should be made blinde.* Christ made an Eye-salve for the cure of a blinde person in John 9. 6. of his spittle and clay, of a compound matter, proceeding from his mouth and the earth, whereby he made the blinde man see: Christ somewhat follows the same method in his compositions of Eye-salves, which he uses towards his spiritual blinde souls that he takes to cure: first he gives us the knowledge of our selves, and of our own earthly matter, and that we favour in our unregeneracy nothing but of earth and earthliness: Next, he brings us to the knowledge of himself, and his Word which proceedeth out of his mouth, and so makes us an happy composition and Eye-salve, whereby we see our poverty, our shame, and nakedness, and all our spiritual wants, and also where remedy is to be had to heal and to save us from all our maladies: and indeed, this is as great a blessing as Christ can bestow upon us, to be truly sensible, and to have a clear sight of our condition; it is the next step to amendment: it is ignorance and blindness that makes us err and go astray, but true saving knowledge will keep us close to God's commandments: If we take any other Eye-salve to anoint our eyes with, save what Christ hath prepared for us in the Panacea or Treasury of his Word, we may take Bird-lime instead of Eye-salve, which will close our eyes the faster: They are not the traditions of men, nor the wisdom and understanding of the wise that will make this precious oyntment, but it is a spiritual quintessental extraction and oyntment, drawn out by the Spirit of Christ out of the holy Limbeck of his Word, and applyed by him unto the blinde Patient, that will make him see the glory of God, and his grace, and to praise him for it unto eternity.

Ver. 19. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be Zealous therefore, and Repent.*

If it be demanded how this verse coheres, or hath relation to the precedent discourse?

I answer, Very much, it being added as a motive, reason, or argument to the church of *Laodicea*, to use the remedy which Christ counsels her unto: If Christ will not spare his own children when they refuse his counsel, it is time for them to look about, to be more zealous, and repent. And secondly, To assure her, That though Christ comes with a most bitter chastisement against her for her sin, yet it is as a father, in love, with the rod of wholesome discipline, as admonition, reproof, correction, &c. *That the man of God may be perfected, and prepared to every good work,* 2 Tim. 3. 16. and if all will not do, Christ hath another rod,

rod, a bitter rod, even for those his professed children too, a quite casting off, and spewing them out of his mouth for ever.

Ques. But how can Christ be said to love such that he so bitterly chastiseth?

I answer, Christ chastiseth his children, not to destroy them, but to bring them to amendment, and to save them, if possibly he may: Christ's rod of Discipline is not a destructive rod, but according to that of David, *With thy rod and staff thou hast supported me*; and therefore he tells *Laodicea* here, that she should not despair of his gracious acceptance, for the great punishment that was coming on her, for he tells her, that they are such as he loves whom he rebukes and chastens; and therefore adds, *Be zealous, and repent*, if she expects his fatherly goodness to be continued towards her.

Here are two degrees of this chastisement, Reproof, and a Smiting: Whence Note,

Obser. *When the word of reproof will not serve to turn to reclaim obstinate sinners, a smiting chastisement must be added thereto.*

If the word of reproof will not fasten on a Delinquent, the stroke of Discipline must; but always in Christ's order and method, not presently, passionately, and rashly, but advisedly, soberly, and in love, according to the advice of the Apostle, after the second or third admonition, that is, after several ways taken for his recovery, and all in vain, then such an obstinate sinner is to be rejected, and chastised with the sharp rod of Discipline: What else is to be expected after Christ's long admonitions and reproofs towards us, but that he should come with his sharp rods and chastisements towards us, when all his convincements will do us no good, nor his rebukes draw any profit or fruits of amendment from us. Surely if he do love us, he will chasten us, which is another Note.

Obser. 2. *That as many as Christ loves, them he chastens.*

If we be children, and not bastards, his rod shall walk among us, *Heb. 12. 7, 8.* Think it not strange when the Saints of God are afflicted chastised, and corrected, it is because they are children, because they are sons, and beloved of God; if we were not of his family, he would leave us alone, to run on in our own perverse ways, until destruction and hell overwhelmed us.

Be zealous therefore, and repent

What zeal is, see formerly on the fifteenth and sixteenth verses. Christ in the former verse prescribed the remedy to the church of *Laodicea* for her disease, and here he adviseth to the application of it. Be zealous, be fervent, be hot: cast away thy half mongrel Religion, which is neither hot nor cold. Purge out O *England* thy Romish leaven, that makes thee hang even half way between heaven and hell, between Christ and Antichrist: Be zealous and repent, O *Laodicea*! cast out, O *England*! thy pretended

pretended riches, honours, and preferments, which works a conceit in thee that thou art rich, whilst thou art but beggarly, and naked, and buy gold tryed of the fire of Christ, and true honours from him, and that white rayment of his, righteousness; and of his holy Spouse in her external offices and ordinances, which will make thee truly honourable, beautiful, rich, and comely: Be zealous I say, and fervent hot after those precious jewels, and spiritual riches, and repent of thy former follies and vain conceits, and then thou wilt be wile to purpose, and become as a Lilly among the Thorns, and the fairest of all thy Sisters.

Ver. 20. *Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

Christ adds here another motive to the poor blinde *Laodiceans* to come unto him for gold, for white rayment, for eye-salve, to supply all their wants, which is drawn from his willingness and readines to come in and converse with all such that are but willing to receive him, and to close with him; and therefore he tells them, *Behold I stand at the door and knock.* Christ comes as one desiring to have entrance, he knocks first, that they may know to whom it is that they must open: Christ coming in his first grace, is irresistible, and as the strong man, dispossesses Satan, and takes possession of the house, the soul, by a spiritual force and over-powering hand: But if the soul, after faith received, by its own sloth, remissness, or backsliding, shall shut the door or entrance thereof against the kindly operations of Christ and his Spirit, Christ is not obliged to break up the door of that heart again by violence, as at his first coming in unto it, but will come and call, and knock for entrance, that is, will wait with mercies, with providences, with precepts, commands, with exhortations and reproofs, that if possible, to melt the straying and erring soul into compunction, and to open again unto him, that the King of glory may enter in. From which posture of Christ, Observe.

Obser. *That Christ uses all possible means for the reclaiming and regaining erring souls into the ways of life.*

He comes as it were a supplicant at their doors, and desires them to give entrance to him: He stands and knocks, he waits, and waits long, and calls, and calls again, by divers and various ways of mercies and grace; he puts them in minde of his former loving kindness, and how ready he is to help them, if they will but open to him, and follow his direction, and hearken to his voice. Sometimes he shakes his rod over them, to bring them to repentance, and tells them, *as many as he loves, he rebukes and chastens*: sometimes he invites them by mercies and gracious considerations to return unto him: then again he takes the terrors of the Law to make

make them see their danger, if they continue obstinate unto his calls: and lastly, he sends his Ambassadors with precept upon precept, and line upon line, beseeching in Christ's name the straying souls to return unto him: Christ will never be wanting to them unless they be wanting unto themselves.

Ques. But why does not Christ himself use his force, and open the door himself by his Spirits power to these poor Laodiceans: Is not he the great Key-bearer of *David*, who openeth, and no man shutteth; and if he would but speak the word, he need not stand knocking at their doors, they would fly open to him, that he might enter in?

Answe. 1. 'Tis true, At Christ's first entring into the soul, our base natures are so resistable and abhorrent to the work of grace, that he must come by force, by a spiritual force, with his Key of *David*, to unlock the doors of our hearts, if he will have an entrance thereinto. But secondly, Having first shed abroad his first grace into our hearts, then he commands us to work in the power of that grace to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; *Having received sh. promises* (saith the Apostle) *cleanse your selves from all filthiness*: 2 Cor. 7. 1. and Christ puts us then upon doing, that we may stir up our graces, improve our talents, and become active, growing, and fruitful christians: and on this account Christ here knocks at the door of the hearts of the church of *Laodicea*, and bids her to hearken to his voice, and to open to him. She had received the first grace of faith from Christ, or else she could not be numbered among the seven golden candlesticks, though she was a sad, disorderly, and rusty one, yet she was a church of Christ still, and therefore might very well be commanded to set her power and grace a working, to open unto Christ, the operations of whose Spirit she had shut out and quenched by her uneven carriage and luke-warm temper.

Thirdly, and in the last place, Know that *Laodicea* had not quite shut the door to Christ, as unto the operation of his graces; she was a church of Christ, though a luke-warm one: but she had shut the door, and denied him passage in some of his Ordinances, by which Christ usually and ordinarily enters; she had shut the door unto a true spiritual Ministry, Discipline, orderly calls, and regular dispensing of his Ordinances, and instead thereof, entertains a formal, lazy, indifferent luke-warm Ministry, State-discipline, Officers, and calls, and so all Ordinances are brought to the scantling of the will of man, not of God, or of Christ, and so makes up a mongrel Hermaphroditical worship, part of God's, and part of man's, which indeed is purely neither God's, nor man's, and therefore an abomination both to God and man: She had shut this door and way of entrance against Christ, as some of our churches has done this day, and therefore Christ comes and knocks; and how! By the Ministry of his Word,

Word, and faithful Witnesses: And as *John* was sent with an Epistle in his hand to *Laodicea*, and the rest of the delinquent Asian churches, so Christ sends his faithful Teachers and Prophets with a burden in their mouths, against all such false worship and doctrine, to unshut the doors, if it may be, that the King of glory may enter in.

Use. From the discoursed premisses it plainly appears, That this Scripture stands little in stead unto the Papists, and their champion *Bellarmino* in his book of *Grace and Free will*, cap. 1. to maintain from hence their Pelagian doctrine, The power of mans Free-will before conversion unto Faith, and amendment: For *Bellarmino* therein triumphantly interrogates, were not he foolish that would knock at his neighbours door, if he knew for certain that there were no man within that could open? It is true, it were so, but *Bellarmino* (for all his great learning) herein is much mistaken: Christ here knocks at a door where there was one within that was able to open, the party was only asleep, he was not dead, or quite departed from his house, and therefore he knocks, and calls unto him to awake and open unto him; like the Spouse in the *Canities* 5. 2. She was asleep when her beloved came and knocked, saying, *Open to me my Sister, my Love, my Dove, my undefiled*. So Christ comes to the church of *Sardis*, vers. 2. and bids her, to awake and strengthen the things that remain: and commands *Laodicea* to open unto him, who had a power and ability to open, though it was grown weak and remiss, and therefore had need of a knocking, a vigorous call to rouse her up unto her duty. And therefore *Bellarmino* is quite mistaken when from hence he asserts, That Christ bids the reprobate and unregenerate to open to him; it is only a believing church, a backslidden luke-warm believing church, that he bids to rise up and open to him, it is not one altogether dead, but a sleepy, careless, luke-warm church that he stirs up to this duty of opening to him.

Secondly I answe, Though it were granted *Bellarmino* that Christ sometimes knocks at the doors of Reprobates and unregenerate persons, and calls to open to him, though they neither will or can open to him, yet Christ may do this (as often he does) without any impeachment to his wisdom; he hereby shows what their duty is, and requires it from them, and justly he may, though they are not in a possibility to perform it, they having forfeited and lost their ability by their own fault, not only in their common parent, the first *Adam*, but also by walking in the same steps of disobedience with him; and Christ is not bound by any Law to restore it again unto them. And therefore Christ in the last place does often call to open to him upon the very reprobate themselves, as in a judiciary way, for the aggravation of their condemnation upon their refusal, according to that of *John* 15. 22. *If I had not come and spoken to them, they had no sin, but now they*

have no cloak for their sin. Thus much in answer to Bellarmine, and his doctrine of Free-will, and the power of the meerly natural man in the works of grace and faith; which are in the first place to be wrought by the Spirit, to be nourished by the Spirit, to be consummated and perfected by the same Spirit. But to proceed.

If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

As if Christ had laid, If any man will be obedient to the word of my mouth, opening the door of their hearts, yeilding obedience to my many and earnest solicitations, I will then come and dwell in that soul, and impart my self unto him, and sup with him; that is, communicate, and have mutual fellowship with him, and he with me. Note hence,

Obser. 1. That it is the Saints highest priviledge, to have fellowship with Christ, and be with them.

Where there are those heavenly intercourses, there is a heaven upon earth, or earth ascending into heaven, and heaven coming down upon earth; persons hereby do become the Temples of the holy Spirit: *I will come in to him*, faith Christ; that is, Christ will dwell in him spiritually, really, operatively by his grace: *and he shall dwell in me*; that is, by faith: and so such become and are made the sons of God, *Luke 19. 5.* and are made partakers of his holy nature. Is it not a great shame to our christian churches, to deny themselves this great priviledge, in not hearkning to the voice of Christ, or opening the door unto him? It is true, we are ready to hearken to the voice of Christ, so far as stands with our interest, that we may not be accounted heathens abroad in the world, and indeed that is all, if it will amount so far; for the ordinance of preaching is no distinguishing Ordinance, *Go Teach all Nations:* and the Ordinances of Prayer and Praise, are but natural duties, which all persons in the world are bound unto as well as christians: but where is the opening the door to Christ in his especial distinguishing Ordinances? Where is the mutual feasting, supping, and communicating between Christ and his churches in his holy Ordinances of the Supper, tasting and feeding on the several and various gifts of the Spirit of Christ in his members? Where is the improving of his Discipline? Where are his Gardens enclosed? Are not all like a Forrest or Wildernes, without any culture or hedge about them? 'Tis true, there are some few gardens, whose savoury spices, and precious ointment does cast a sweet smelling favour abroad; but their tender Grapes are but weak, and it is to be feared, if God's mercy prevent not, that either the little Foxes will undermine them, or the wild Boar root them out: I speak it according to my judgement and conscience, that our contention and fitting satisfied under a formal and luke-warm preaching, and some other natural du-

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ties only, will be a means to provoke God to spew us out of his mouth for our half way Religion; the one ought to be done, and the other not left undone: we ought to have a respect to the whole will of God, not so far only as our carnal wisdom thinks sufficient, and no farther. It was once, and not long since, a just complaint, That common Prayer and other church Discipline, and Episcopal Ruling, had thrust out of doors a true preaching, and divers other holy Ordinances of Christ: But observe the change, now it is to be feared, that preaching will silence and invalidate many other of the Ordinances of Christ, and render them useles to us: Therefore we are to hearken to the voice of God, the whole voice of God, and open to it, if we expect Christ to come in, and to sup with us, and we with him. We are first to hearken to his Word, open the door to him of our hearts in the preaching thereof; then we are to proceed, and not sit still, as those silly ones that are ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge or practise of the truth; we are to go on to the work of perfection; that is, to walk in all the Ways and Ordinances of Christ, which will build up our souls unto the measure of a perfect man in Christ, and make us wise indeed unto salvation.

Lastly, I conceive there is more in these words, *I will sup with him, and be with me*, then a spiritual participating of Christ in his Ordinances in this life. The words have respect unto futurity, and the other life, as the next verse intimates, and that of *Luke 13. 29. Then shall they come from the East, and West, North and South, and shall sit at Table in the Kingdom of God:* And when is that time? But in that day when Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the faithful shall appear in the Kingdom of Christ, and all the wicked thrust out of doors, ver. 28. And this is that which Christ intimateth in *Matth. 26. 29.* to his Disciples after his last Supper, *That henceforth he would not drink of this fruit of the Vine, until that day when he should drink it new with them in his Fathers Kingdom.* Christ will again feast, communicate, and entertain mutual fellowship with his Disciples, before the ultimate end; though not in a carnal and sensual manner, yet in a more heavenly and spiritual manner; and therefore it is called New Wine, in respect it is received not in the old common way, but in a more singular and spiritual way and manner: it is called new, as *Jerusalem* that comes down from God is called new, in respect of its perfection, the old being passed away: And that day when this heavenly Supper or Feast will be, is, when that Royal Nuptial feast is prepared, at that wedding mentioned *Rev. 21. 2, 9.* for the heavenly Bride, the Lamb's wife, when Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the faithful, shall sit at Table together with Christ in his most glorious and happy Millenary Reigne and Kingdom: and I can see no inconvenience why this should not be so literally understood, it being a sure rule in interpreting Scriptures, That

we are not to depart from the plain literal sense thereof, unless there be some evident cause to the contrary, as being contrary to the coherence, against the Analogy of faith, or some other more plain and express Scriptures: But this sense accords and harmonizes with a full consonant of other Scriptures; and therefore *Piscator* well observes upon this of *Matth. 26. 29.* *Quare non videtur hoc intelligendum de Vino, quod una cum Discipulis biberet Dominus post Resurrectionem suum.* *Nam et si per dies illos quadraginta, scie illis subinde ostendit, aitque etiam cum is edit, nulla tamen pars sit mentio: nec moris erat apud Iudeos bibere Vinum in Prandis ac Cœnis quo ieditur, sed tantum in solemnioribus Convivis.* Though it is mentioned that Christ did eat with his Disciples, after his resurrection, before he ascended, yet there is no mention of drinking this new wine, which was reserved for the day of his Kingdom which was not then in being; for he told his Disciples, that he was then a going to prepare a place, a Kingdom for them, *John 14. 2.* wherein they should sup with him, have fellowship with him, and sit on his Throne, and Reigne with him, as the procedure of the next verse will manifest.

Verse 21. *To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his Throne.*

Christ here adds a third reason to the luke-warm *Laodiceans* to come unto him, it being by way of reward, a Throne: Christ tells the sons of *Zebedee*, *Matth. 20. 23.* *That to sit on his right hand, and on his left, is not his to give;* but he having since by his death purchased this power into his hands, *for all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth,* *Matth. 28. 18.* He has a just right to dispose and grant to sit with him in his Throne to all his conquering Saints; Christ's Throne here, and the Father's are contradistinguished, as two distinct Thrones, and not one and the same: *subordinata, or diversa, non sunt contraria:* My Throne, and the Father's Throne carries a variety, not a contrariety in them. The Son is not the Father, neither is the Father the Son. So neither is the Son's Throne the Father's Throne, nor on the other side, the Father's Throne the Son's Throne. Christ will have his Throne as God-man here on earth, wherein himself and members shall have a share, though inferior unto the Head; for they shall reign on earth, *Rev. 5. 10.* and the Father has his Throne, the highest heaven of glory, *Psal. 11. 4. 1sa. 66. 1.* whereon Christ is set down, *Col. 3. 1.* and this cannot be called Christ's Throne, properly as his own; for Christ's Kingdom or Throne is a Throne of executing judgment and righteousness, and breaking all his enemies as a Potters vessel with a rod of Iron, *cap. 2. 27. 2 Pet. 3. 13.* Now this cannot be commodiously applied

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to the Father's Throne, which Christ at present enjoyeth in the highest heavens: that is the Holiest of Holies into which Christ is entered, a place only meet for Angelical hallelujahs, and spirits of men made perfect, not for ruling, reigning, judging and breaking his obstinate enemies, which he (as man) must do on earth. But more of this hereafter. Only hence Note,

Obser. *That the time is yet to come when Christ is to have a Throne of his own, on which, together with him, the overcoming Saints shall sit and reign on earth.*

That this Throne is to commence in futurity, is plain from Christ's promise made here to the overcoming Saints, long after Christ's ascension into the Father's Throne; and that it shall be here on earth, is plain from *cap. 5. 10.* where the Elders triumphant song does clear it: *Thou hast made us unto our God Kings and Priests, and we shall reign on earth,* compared to *chap. 20 v. 11.* and that of *Matthew 5. 5.* *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth;* all is in the future tense: for I am sure experience shews, they have not yet inherited the earth, for they have in all past times complained, We have been strangers and Pilgrims; and in all ages hitherto afflighed, distressed, and persecuted, as servants, and never as yet inherited the earth, that is become the only Lords as the true heirs and proprietors thereof, and therefore yet to come. I shall only add that of *Luke 20. 28, 29, 30.* *Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me: I hat ye may eat and drink at my Table in my Kingdom, and sit on Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel.* I see no inconvenience of understanding these words literally, as unto the general scope thereof, according to that ancient rule; *Non est a litera seu propria Scriptura significatio recedendam, nisi evidens aliqua necessitas cogat & Scriptura veritas in ipsa litera pericitari videatur.* And by the way take notice, That there are many godly learned men, both in our own Nation, and others also, that though they take not up this opinion as their own, nor cannot wholly comport with it in their judgment, yet speak very favourably of it, and very ingeniously call it a harmless opinion, not directly or indirectly striking or undermining any the fundamentals of the Faith. But to proceed.

In this last Scripture take notice, 1. What therein is promised as a peculiar reward to them that abide temptations with or for Christ: and it is a Kingdom, Christ's Kingdom, *my Kingdom,* *vers. 30.* compare this with *Rev. 11. 18.* and *Rev. 20. 4.*

2. Christ appoints unto them a Kingdom as his Father had appointed to him a kingdom, but the Father (as is on all sides agreed) appointed not a particular kingdom for Christ, after the ultimate judgement in the supernal heavens; for it is affirmed on all hands, that Christ then and there shall deliver up the Kingdom, the power and ruling into the hands of the Father, that God may be all

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in all, according to that of *1 Cor. 15. 24, 28.* Now in a Kingdom there are relations, persons to rule, and persons ruled, to wit, Christ and his Saints to rule, and unbelievers to be ruled: but in the highest heavens there is nothing to be made subject to Christ and his Saints, no unbeliever or unclean thing must enter thereinto, the blessed Angels, the ministering Spirits, being only subject to Christ, *Heb. 1. 13, 14.* Neither can this be meant of Christ's spiritual Kingdom, wherein Believers then were, and in all ages formerly, and therefore cannot be meant of this Kingdom promised and prophesied of in this Scripture: Besides, the spiritual Kingdom of Christ is called often by *John*, the Kingdom of patience, wherein the Saints endure temptations, afflictions, and trials, which Christ here mentions, and to cannot with the least reason signify the Kingdom of Reward, which Christ promiseth as the effects, crown, result, and reward of that enduring and patience.

3. Eating, drinking, and such actions, are unsuitable actions and expressions to signify the glory of the highest heavens; but very suitable to express Christ's glorious Kingdom here on earth, for it is promised as a Paradice, and a Tree of life therein, *Rev. 2. 7. & 22. 2.* And it is such a high spiritual eating and drinking, it being as yet a hidden Manna unto us, that we cannot possibly comprehend the excellency thereof, but under Types and Figures meet for our capacities.

4. The conquering Saints are to sit on Thrones to judge the twelve Tribes of Israel: In Christ's spiritual Kingdom this was never yet done, but such were rather judged and trampled under foot by the powers of the world, and Antichrist, and in the supremest ultimate glory there is nothing to be judged, neither persons nor things; for that is the Father's Throne, wherein Christ shall lay down all Authority, and himself be also subject unto the Father, as that *1 Cor. 15. 24, 25, 28.*

Therefore this Kingdom here meant, which Christ calls *My Kingdom, and My Throne, is yet to come here on earth before the ultimate day of judgement, and the Saints highest state of glory in the supremest heavens, which is the Father's Throne.*

Object. But some will object, That this which is called Christ's Kingdom, is also the same with the Father's Kingdom, and not distinct from it, but one and the same, and to this purpose urge that Scripture, *Math. 26. 29. I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the Vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom.* Now that which you interpret to be the Son's Kingdom, is here called the Father's Kingdom, and therefore one and the same.

Answe. I answer, 'Tis true, The Son's Kingdom is called in Scripture the Father's Kingdom, for divers reasons.

1. Because the Father gives it to Christ, and therefore he is called, *Psal. 2. 8. His King.*

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2. Because the Father and the Son are one by an unspeakable Union, and so the Kingdom of the Son, may be called the Kingdom of the Father; that is the Kingdom of God: for Father is often ascribed in Scripture to the Godhead, as that of *John 17. 3. This is life eternal, that they know thee, to wit, the Father, to be the only true God, &c.* And by reason of the union of both natures in one person, Christ; it is called *Eph. 5. 5. The Kingdom of Christ, and of God: and The Throne of God and the Lamb, Rev. 22. 3. in the holy City, the New Jerusalem.* So that Christ, as man, as one with the Father, or God, reigns in this happy millenary Kingdom, and so may be also called the Father's Kingdom, wherein he will drink his new wine with his faithful ones before the ultimate day of judgement, so this makes not at all against the distinct Kingdoms of the Father and Christ, which is before asserted, and plainly evidenced from divers Scriptures; Let the industrious enquiring Reader, read more at large in *D. Homes, M. Maton, and M. Mede* hereon, and ver 12. of this chapter.

But for a more full explicating and opening the Truth of this point, understand, That Christ's Kingdom in Scripture hath a diverse acceptation. First, Christ is King by right of creation, *Heb. 1. 2.* and this is his natural Kingdom, which he hath as one God with the Father from everlasting. Secondly, Christ is King by right of Purchase; as the first, he rules and governs all the Kings and Nations of the world, and so is King of Kings: But by the second, he governs more especially his church and people; and this he does as God-man, and is properly called Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom. And this his Mediatorial Kingdom hath in it divers periods, some more lowly, some more exaltant and triumphant. Christ was a born King; witness the *Magi's* enquiry after him that was born King of the Jews, and their majestic presents of Gold, Myrrh, and Frankincense; but his power was then but obscure and low, which appeared afterwards somewhat more radiant, in imposing his commands, doctrines, and ordinances upon his followers and disciples; but this was but dark, and somewhat lowly also; as an Heir in his minority: After his Resurrection and Ascension, he commands his Agents and Ambassadors to negotiate the great affairs of his Kingdom in his absence, by the help and concomitancy of his Spirit with them; and this is therefore called Christ's Spiritual or Ministerial Kingdom, which is to continue unto his second coming, the great work wherein is, to preach the Messiah, and his Doctrine of Faith, and his second coming: but this is mixed too with a great deal of affliction, trouble, and obscurity. But there is another period of this Mediatorial Kingdom of Christ, which is most glorious and triumphant, and that is, at his last appearance, when all these low dispensations shall be done away, when he shall reign, and none shall let; All other periods were mixed with much tears and sorrow: but in this

this they shall be quite wiped off. In this last period there is given him, not only as God, but as man, or rather as God-man, Dominion, and Glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, Nations, and Languages should serve him, *Dan. 7. 14.* and *Psal. 2. 8.* *Ask of me, and I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth for thy possession:* Now this cannot with any reason be attributed to that Kingdom which Christ had as God with the Father by right of Creation in the first sense, because it is to be given to the Son of Man coming in the cloud, by the Ancient of days, long after the time of *Daniel's* prophesie; and Christ had long before the time of *Daniel*, even from the beginning, that natural Kingdom of his, as one with the Father, Neither secondly can it be applyed with any more shew of reason to the spiritual Kingdom of Christ now under the Gospel, because how few of the Nations of the world, and Languages, do as much as own or profess the name of Christ? It being, as some Learned obiective, and that aright, That not a tenth part of all the Nations and Tongues in the world, do as much as own or acknowledge the Name of Christ: and then again, among those that profess Christ, how great a part thereof are Apostate Anti-christians and even violent persecutors of the Truth, as it is in Jesus? Yea again, consider how few of those in the Reformed Nations, where the Gospel of Christ is in more clearness and light discovered and preached, are truly sincere servants of Christ, submitting with cheerfulness unto the Scepter of his righteousness, owning Christ and godliness in the power thereof? Therefore surely this Kingdom and happy period is yet to come, as Christ says, *John 18. 36.* *My Kingdom is not of this world;* that is, of this present world: but that that is to come after the Resurrection, and wherin dwelleth righteousness, and is here promised as a reward to the overcoming Saints, and for which we pray in the Lord's prayer, *Thy Kingdom come;* which will not be given by the Ancient of days unto the Son of man, until he comes in the clouds, *Dan. 7. 13.* compared to *Rev. 14. 14.*

Lastly, I shall add one humane testimony, and I believe, will not be the least with some, and that is, of our late Assembly of Divines in their Annotations only on two Scriptures, to prove the matter and substance I contend for; to wit, a more glorious triumphant state of the church of Christ before the ultimate day of Judgement.

First, They in their new Annotations, on *Rev. 5. 10.* *And we shall reign on earth,* confess; That this may signifie the prosperous times of the church under Christian Kings and Emperours; *Dan. 7. 27.* *Psal. 37. 11.* *The meek shall inherit the earth.* And on *Rev. 2. 25, 26.* they say, *Hold fast till I come,* signifie, Till Christ's second coming, general or special. *Power over the Nations,* signifie, To joyn with Christ in judging the Nations, &c. And,

And, that giving the *Morning Star,* signifies, Christ's giving the full truition of himself. Thus far they: Which is not yet fulfilled in the full extent thereof, and therefore yet to be accomplished in futurity.

But here by the way I shall take leave to show their great mistake, that expect a triumphant state of the church, or that Christ's Reigne or Monarchy shall be set up in his church, before Christ's second appearance in the clouds to accomplish this work. This opinion is not a little dangerous and pernicious both unto the peace and quiet of the Saints, and unto all Magistracy that such opinionists live under: for once entertain the judgement that Christ's Kingdom is now to be set up, all other Opposites and Kingdoms must down before it: for who would count it a hard laying, or sinful, to remove humane Powers, and Magistrates, be they ever so just, that stands in the way of the setting up of the all-righteous Scepter of Christ? Is it not on this very ground and principle that every party and faction that pretends highest to Christ, hath endeavoured to set it self in the Throne? How was Episcopacy dethroned, but that Presbyterie thought it self of Divine Right, and up the Kingdom of Christ must go with them? Whether Prelacy or Presbyterie be of the Diviner or better Size, that is not the dispute, but having once entertained the concept that the Kingdom of Christ did consist in their *Geneva* model and Presbyterie; what Nation was at peace among the Reformed, before it was exalted and had the Throne? Again, This principle being again entertained by some others pretending to more holines and truth then they; O! How they labour for an eruption, like an inbred wind within the bowels of the earth, never at rest, till it sets up its interest, or its pretended Kingdom of Christ up at top? Was not this the very principle and fancy that carried on those irregular heads of *Munster*, and *John of Leyden*, &c. that made them dream of a new State come down among them from God, when they were as weak, frail, and sinful, as any others? Did not this excite them to contemn all Powers and Magistracy whatsoever, and to tread all under foot that stood in the way of their new *Camera*? And is not this again attempted and acted by some in our days that have taken up the same principle? And who knows where it will rest being once set on foot, or working by a fiery irregular zeal? Judicious M. *Hooker* in his preface to his *Ecclesiastical Policy*, though an Episopcal man, yet wisely forelaw the evil of this judgement and principle, and gave forewarning of the danger of it: It did destroy Episcopacy, and it will destroy Presbyterie, and all Government whatsoever, if it be not moderated and wisely regulated by an over-mastering spirit of Grace: and herein I hope I have done but my duty, and discharged my conscience, in shewing the false ground of many mens miscarriages about the prosecution and attainment of this

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Kingdom of Christ, which indeed will never be attained to in this infirm and corrupt generation, which is partly spiritual, and partly carnal, and they that endeavour to set it up, may justly perish in the attempt, being not called to it, neither by God nor Christ: Neither let any say hence, that I contemn full and sincere endeavours of reforming of the Doctrine and Discipline of our churches unto the primitive pattern; this is all that is required at our hands, when God opens a door unto us unto this work, it is not to set up the church triumphant before Christ shall appear to be her Captain and Leader on, which then will be with great power and might, and none shall hinder: we are now commanded to suffer, and to overcome our temptations patiently, not to reign and triumph, which is reserved as a reward of our patience unto another life. He that thus overcometh, shall sit down with Christ in his Throne, and reign with him, whilst others may be shut out for their sin of rebellion and disobedience to the Powers they live under.

Having shewed the danger of this false principle, to wit, an expectancy to reign with Christ at present, let all wise christians shun it, as a ruinous house, that is ready to overwhelm all that is under it, and having plucked up the rotten prop, the building thereon must needs fall to ground, and come to nought; *Cum tollitur causa, tollitur effectus:* and instead of this broken reed, let the faithful soul comfort and support it self in patience with the hopes of Christ's true and real Kingdom, wherewith John was affected and supported, *Rev. 1.9.* which shall come in glory and great power: and none shall stay as now, *Lo here is Christ, or there is Christ,* but he shall be most evident and perspicuously glorious. Lo; He cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him, and every one shall mourn because of him, *v. 7.* This Kingdom of Christ is not advanced by any capricious whimsies of ours, but is brought to light in power and great Majesty, where Christ comes with his Armies, and myriads of Angels and raised Saints, *Rev. 19. 14. & 20. 4.* to take the Kingdom unto himself, when Antichrist and all his adherents are destroyed by the appearance of the Lord Christ, then shall they fly unto the Rocks and the Mountains, and call to them to fall upon them, to hide them from the presence of the Lamb that sitteth on the Throne: and then all the Kingdoms of the world shall become the Kingdoms of our God, and his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah, Amen.

And for a conclusion of all, let the faithful ones of Christ hearken to the often repeated admonition of the Spirit in the last verse,

Verse

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Vers. 22. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*

He that is an understanding christian among you, let him consider what graces the Spirit hath set forth to their imitation, and approved of by various encouragements, and promises of rewards, and what sins and faults he hath reproved and menaced with dreadful judgements in each and every one of those seven Asian churches, that he may avoid the one, and embrace the other, that so his portion may fall in the land of the living: What was written to them, was written for our example; and if we be found in their conditions, we shall receive our rewards accordingly, for every one shall receive according to his works.

O Lord Christ, that has moved the heart of thy servant to make these things known unto the children of men, let him be a learner himself at the foot-stool of thy grace, and blessed be thy holy Name, that hath gone thus far with thy poor servant. O let his own words be imprinted in his own heart: Keep him humble, Lord, that he be not lifted up in his own eyes, lest whilst he comes a Teacher unto others, he himself becomes a cast-away. O Lord Christ, Give thy servant power from thy self to overcome his temptations, that he may sit with thee in thy Throne, even as thou hast overcome, and art set down in thy Fathers Throne. Pardon, O Christ, not only the faults of this undertaking, but the many sins and errors of all his life. O cover him and them with thy white rayment, and then he shall walk in white before thee, and at thy appearance, his nakedness shall not appear. Remember, O Lord, thy Church and People among us, for good: O let them hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches, That thy Name may be gloriously exalted within our days, That thy Truth may run to and fro, and be increased, and that all be kept and preserved within the compass of their duty, both towards God and Man, That so we may have sweet smelling Gardens, holy Assemblies within our Land, where the Lord may take delight to dwell in.

Hear O Lord thy poor servant, for thy wonted mercies sake, in and thorrow the Son of thy own love; to whom with thy self, and holy Spirit, one Eternal, Ever-living Lord God, be all glory, dominion, praise, and power, for ever and for ever, Amen.

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